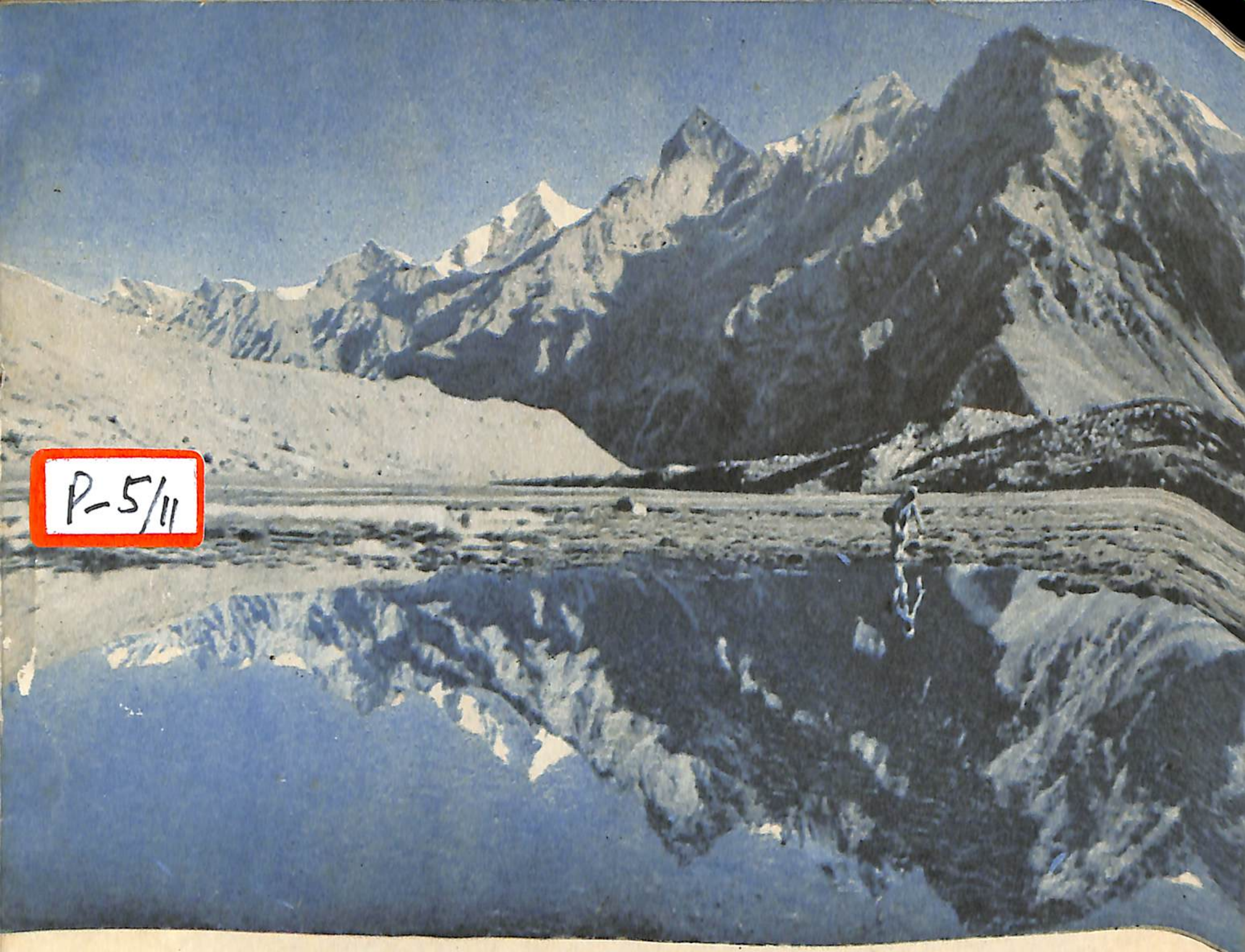


VOL. LXXXII JANUARY 1977

Prabuddha Bharata

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Swami Vivekananda



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Reflections of Mounts Shwetwana, Thailu, Sudarsan in a lake in Tapovan ground, Central Himalayas.

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXII JANUARY 1977 No. 1

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'While practising the disciplines of the Vedas, I became a sannyasi. I used to lie down in the chandni and say to Hriday : "I am a sannyasi. I shall take my meals here. . . ."[1]

'I had all the experiences that one should have, according to the scriptures, after one's direct perception of God. I behaved like a child, like a madman, like a ghoul, and like an inert thing.'

*

'I had once a vision : I felt that One Substance had taken the form of the cosmos with all living creatures, which resembled a house of wax with men, animals, gardens, roads and the rest, all made of wax and nothing but wax.'

'Referring to a certain place, someone once said to me "Nobody sings the name of God there. It has no holy atmosphere." No sooner did he say this than I perceived that it was God alone who had become all living beings. They appeared as countless bubbles or reflections in the Ocean of Satchidananda.

'Again, I find sometimes that living being are like so many pillows made of Indivisible Consciousness. Once I was on my way to Burdwan from Kamarpukur. At one place I ran to the meadow to see how living beings are sustained. I saw ants crawling there. It appeared to me that every place was filled with Consciousness.'

[Soon the Master entered into Samadhi, regaining partial consciousness of the outer world after a long time. He began to laugh like a boy and pace the room, his face beaming with joy, eyes not fixed on any particular object, and said :] 'I saw the paramahamsa who stayed under the banyan-tree walking thus with just such a smile. Am I too in that state of mind?'

*

---

[1] The chandani is an open portico. in the temple garden with steps descending to the Ganges. According to the orthodox Hindu tradition, a monk is forbidden to live in a house.

[Soon after the completion of the Master's Advaitic sadhana, he became attracted to the liberal doctrine of the Islam, as presented to him by one Govinda Rai, a liberal Hindu who had become a devout follower of Islam. The Master said:] 'I then devotionally repeated the holy syllable "Allah", wore clothes like the Muslims, said Namaz thrice daily, and felt disinclined even to see Hindu deities, not to speak of saluting them, inasmuch as the Hindu mode of thought vanished altogether from my mind. I spent three days in that mood, and had the full realization of the result of practices according to that faith.'

*

'I used to find no distinction between the sacred Tulsi and the insignificant Sajina leaf. The feeling of distinction was entirely destroyed. Once I was meditating under the banyan when I was shown a Mussalman[2] with a long beard. He came to me with rice in an earthen plate. He fed some other Mussalmans with the rice and also gave me a few grains to eat. The Mother showed me that there exists only One, and not two. It is Satchidananda alone that has taken all these various forms; He alone has become the world and its living beings. Again, it is He who has become food.'

*

'One day I had the vision of Consciousness, non-dual and indivisible. At first it had been revealed to me that there were innumerable men, animals, and other creatures. Among them there were aristocrats, the English, the Mussalmans, myself, scavengers, dogs, and also a bearded Mussalman with an earthenware tray of rice in his hand. He put a few grains of rice into everybody's mouth. I too tasted a little.

'Another day I saw rice, vegetables, and other food-stuffs, and filth and dirt as well, lying around. Suddenly the soul came out of my body and, like a flame, touched everything. It was like a protruding tongue of fire and tasted everything once, even the excreta. It was revealed to me that all these are one Substance, the non-dual and indivisible Consciousness.'

*

'I received the Allah mantra from Govinda Rai. Rice with onions was cooked for me in the kuthi.[3] I ate some. I ate curry in Mani Mallick's garden house, but I felt no kind of repulsion to it.

'When I went to Kamarpukur, Ramlal's father[4] was frightened. He thought I might eat at any and every house. He was frightened to think I might be expelled from the caste; so I couldn't stay long. I came away.'

'She [the Divine Mother] came to me another day as a Mussalman girl six or seven years old. She had a Tilak on her forehead and was naked. She walked with me, joking and frisking like a child.'

---

[2] It was perhaps a vision of Mohammed, the founder of Islam.
[3] Bungalow in Dakshineswar temple garden, where the proprietors and their guests stayed when visiting Dakshineswar.
[4] Elder brother of Sri Ramakrishna.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

He alone can be religious who dares say, as the mighty Buddha once said under the Bo-tree, when this idea of practicality appeared before him and he saw that it was nonsense, and yet could not find a way out. When the temptation came to him to give up his search after truth, to go back to the world and live the old life of fraud, calling things by wrong names, telling lies to oneself and to everybody, he, the giant, conquered it and said, 'Death is better than a vegetating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battlefield than to live a life of defeat.' This is the basis of religion. When a man takes this stand, he is on the way to find the truth, he is on the way to God. That determination must be the first impulse towards becoming religious. I will hew out a way for myself. I will know the truth, or give up my life in the attempt. For on this side it is nothing, it is gone, it is vanishing every day. The beautiful, hopeful, young person of today is the veteran of tomorrow. Hopes and joys and pleasures will die like blossoms with tomorrow's frost. That is one side; on the other, there are the great charms of conquest, victories over all the ills of life, victory over life itself, the conquest of the universe. On that side men can stand. Those who dare, therefore, to struggle for victory, for truth, for religion, are in the right way; and that is what the Vedas preach: Be not in despair; the way is very difficult, like walking on the edge of a razor; yet despair not, arise, awake, and find the ideal, the goal.

Vivekananda

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

EDITORIAL

The materialistic, mechanistic, and so-called modern outlook and attitude towards life and its problems, have been gaining ground in the minds and hearts of vast numbers of people around the world. Politics, economics, and even such a noble human endeavour as science, have been subjected to narrow, vested and violent interests, thus missing the significance of breadth of vision and depth of sincerity in achieving the true goals of individual and national life. Religion, philosophy, and ethics, are more professed than practised, the fallacious argument being that these involve principles and practices that are easier said than done. Even in the deliberations and decisions of those that are invested with leadership and authority—exceptions, here and there, apart—it is the growing fashion to treat spiritual ideals and values as mere academic subjects. Ideologies and organizations, wars and revolutions, may have their place in the passage of social and historical events; but can they possibly be the goals or even the paths to the goals of life?

Peace, Progress, and Prosperity still remain the aims of the human individual, notwithstanding the prevailing violence, backwardness, and poverty that surround him even today. Money-earning and the consequent accumulation of wealth occupy an important place in man's life. All other interests and functions seem to be subordinated to this one concern. It is but natural that we have to be individuals, with disparate talents and tendencies. But this does not require us to be individualistic and selfish, without purity or charity in motivations. Has not the world already suffered enough from a philosophy of self-aggrandizement which tends to encourage everybody to be reckless in pursuit of his own interest, taking advantage of others and

making them work to feed his greed of limitless gain? A 'split personality', will be not far to seek. It disintegrates a person's sense of responsibility and fidelity within himself, creating a needless conflict between his principles and practice, his morality and practicality, and his spiritual interests and material attachments. Injustice and insolence—racial, social or national—invite revenge and violence, following, the law that action and reaction are equal but opposite. Unless unifying ideals and values, bred and cultivated in each and every individual, assert themselves over the forces of disintegration, a set-back to the common welfare and all-round progress seems inevitable.

With the best of advantages that science and man's intelligence have provided for human happiness, there is little or no abatement in the quantum of pain and misery of one kind or another that mankind is heir to. The popular concepts of power and pleasure, what to speak of progress, are still notoriously hard to define and measure. Basically, love, sympathy and fellowship alone are the factors that can keep nations in harmony and peace. In daily living, the relation between man and man is most important. Having tried in vain every form of secular effort in engendering stable social cohesion and individual equilibrium, will it be termed a truism if we make bold to reaffirm that real religion and spirituality have contributed more to bring men and nations together, than any other factor? It is the voice of Truth and Divinity that has declared the interdependence of matter and spirit, of action and contemplation, of work and worship. Religion without humanity, and humanity without religion, are both incomplete.

Any schism in the soul of man is more harmful to him than any other misfortune that may befall him. This has to be guarded against by re-emphasizing the basic spiritual truth that every individual, as Vedanta puts it, is potentially divine and is endowed with a body and mind through which he has to attain his goal of manifesting the divinity already present in him. As the human being is much more than a mere animal on two legs, he must strive his utmost to achieve success in his spiritual endeavour, with ardent enthusiasm and determined pursuit. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'What we want are energy, love of independence, spirit of self-reliance, immovable fortitude, dexterity in action, bond of unity of purpose, and thirst for improvement.' 'Success' is a magic word that charms everyone ; but it depends much on hard work, to which few are attracted. The longing for things that are good and great is common, no doubt, but the longing for being worthy of those things is far less common. The call of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, spoken by one who ruled over death itself—which men most fear—to the bold and dedicated boy Nachiketa, is unmistakable : '*Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān-nibodhata ; kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā, durgaṁ pathas-tatkavayo vadanti*'—'Arise, Awake, and (strive to) realize (the Highest Truth) by approaching the most qualified (teachers). Sharp as a razor's edge, hard and difficult to traverse, is that path (to the highest spiritual goal)—so say the wise.'[1] The spiritual treasure that lies buried within, waiting to be discovered, developed and expressed in thought, word, and deed, is immeasurably greater than all the material riches on earth waiting to be appropriated.

The Upanishad exhorts us to 'Arise' and 'Awake'. It is well known that various forms of meditation and spiritual practice, when rightly and regularly followed, result in gradual revelation of rising levels of spiritual awakening. Man should lift himself up by himself, says the *Gita*, because one is one's own friend and one is one's own enemy. The rising of the Kundalini psychic power) up through the six centres

[1] *Katha Upanisad*, I. iii. 14.

('lotuses') to the seventh centre of Supreme Consciousness and total awareness, is the Yogis' way of describing the spiritual evolution of man, the symbolic interpretation of upward and inward growth and development. The individual has to achieve his goals and satisfactions by rising above the thraldom of dualities, above the limitations of shame, fear, hatred, and weakness. Every thinking and feeling person of enlightenment, does realize that he is essentially a spiritual being, residing in a physical body. Yet how few understand and admit the statement of fact, often referred to as Maya, that man is a slave to his passions and prejudices, that he is bound by sensate organic ties to his body, senses, mind, intelligence, and ego. 'If a man has a few kind words said to him,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'he begins to smile, and when he hears a few harsh words, he begins to weep. He is a slave to a bit of bread, to a breath of air ; a slave to dress, a slave to patriotism, to country, to name, and to fame. He is thus in the midst of slavery, and the real Man has become buried within, through his bondage.'[2] However, it is true, at the same time, that when one rises resolutely above all this slavery, there comes an intense desire to struggle for the goal of spiritual freedom. Sri Ramakrishna teaches : 'Be in the world, but be not of the world—like the lotus leaf in water.'

To the question, 'Are you a god, or a saint, or a spirit?', Lord Buddha is reported to have answered, 'I am none of these. I am the *awakened* (*Buddha*).' In any form of activity leading to success and achievement of the goal, the initial need is to arouse enthusiasm and interest. Next, to be fully and properly awakened to the awareness of purpose, method and effort that relate the aspirant to the goal in view. The evils that have corrupted men's hearts tend to stem from the purely hedonistic attitude to life, with the aim of uninterrupted pursuit of pleasure for oneself. Swami Vivekananda, the most dynamic awakener of dormant and struggling souls, taught the world how to wake up from the slumber of ignorance, fear, and weakness. In God and man, as we learn from Swami Vivekananda, is essentially the same Spirit, the same Infinite Divinity. It is ignorance that makes all the external differences. The unmanifested God in man has to be manifested, brought forth, and given as a blessing to all. Ignorance is at the root of most of our life's problems. It envelopes the heart and intelligence, says the *Gita*, in various ways, even as fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror is covered by dust, a foetus is covered by the secundine.[3] In the words of Swami Vivekananda : 'Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery we see. Let men have light. Let them be pure and spiritually strong and educated, then alone will misery cease in the world, not before.'[4] Let men and women wake up from lethargy, apathy and inertia, to alertness, mindfulness and vigorous activity. The soul is 'asleep' in most people that realize not the real and ultimate goal of human life. To this, a humorous remark was once added, 'Yes, the soul is at times fast asleep, and if you listen carefully you can hear it snore !'

But then, how can we assert our innate eternal freedom? By the power of energy, enthusiasm, and faith. If a religion emphasizes its spiritual philosophy and practice more than its mythology and ritual we see that it is better able to avoid fanaticism, and that it does not need to draw the sword to compel others to believe as it does. Fanatics in religion also exhibit energy, enthusiasm, and faith ; but they are as irre-

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[2] *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. I (1972), p. 411.

[3] *Bhagavad-Gita*, III, 38.

[4] *Com. Works*, Vol. I, p. 53.

sponsible as lunatics where fellow-human beings are concerned. To prevent such misfits and maladjustments from perverting religion in practice and profession, the spiritual tradition of India has successfully sought to absorb everything that enters into it, raising it at the same time to higher levels. Swami Vivekananda wanted India's ancient religion and culture to stand before the world as a model of, and inspiration in, harmony, tolerance and spiritual oneness despite internal problems and difficulties in other areas. The latitude and scope of free unhindered choice permitted to each individual in the spiritual tradition of India reflects and rejuvenates the spirit of democracy in collective life and the principle of peaceful coexistence in personal life. Swamiji's call to the youth of the nation is: 'Believe in yourself first and then believe in anything else. In the history of the world you will find that only those nations that have believed in themselves have become great and strong.' The same principle holds good in the case of individuals also.

The clarion call of the great spiritual teachers and leaders of the world from time immemorial has been potently summarized by Swami Vivekananda and couched in the words, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' In the Shanti Parva of the *Mahabharata,* the grandsire Bhishma tells Yudhishthira, eldest of the Pandavas, 'Son, always strive with exertion; without exertion, fate will not achieve for kings their purpose. I consider human endeavour as greater; by believing in fate one confounds oneself.' The *Gita* message is clear in its stress on a calm, collected, and controlled mind, while doing action in a selfless detached spirit, and balancing such action with a certain proportion of knowledge and devotion. When a good seed is planted in the right type of prepared soil, and water, air, and manure made available, it becomes a plant of its own kind, developing after the law of its own growth. Similar is the case with an individual in the milieu of his material, social and spiritual means and ends. A spiritually strong and sound person can be effective and efficient in every other respect, if he so wishes and directs his energies accordingly. The spiritual aspiration in man is as natural and normal as any of his other goals and aspirations. But it demands, for its minimum achievement, steady practice, determined effort, and great sacrifice.

Truth, God, and Perfection may be said to be inherent in the soul and inner essence of each person. But the superimposed coverings of identification with passions and prejudices, and the faults and failings natural to human existence, seem to create—though not actually and really—external differences and distinctions that most of us take for granted. Over-generalization, over-simplification, undervaluation, and justification are the four ways of support and solace that the modern sophisticated intellectual generally seeks in his search for ego-satisfaction. The lop-sided development of the head over the heart, the emphasis on material sensate disvalues, rather than on mental health and ethical and spiritual values, have brought many modes and methods of physical and psychological indulgence. With artificial wants come multifarious miseries. Not only religion, but also the science of human possibilities, is of the view that there can be no solution for human misery without cultivating a pure, gentle, and warm heart.

Of all births, the human is the highest—even better than that of a god or an angel, because it is only in this state that one can attain real and complete freedom. The scriptures of India declare that all the universe was formerly in the Divine (Brahman), it has been projected out of the Divine, and it all will return to the Divine, like a circuit completed by returning to a dynamo. Out of this Divine was also projected the individual soul, which, after passing through various bodies and forms of

cyclical existence in the relative universe, will arrive at the human level,—the nearest approach to Brahman pure and absolute—and then will go back to Brahman, the Divine. This is the goal of all effort and struggle in life. *Saṁsāra* literally means 'intensely and purposefully moving', a travelling along the round of births and deaths until final liberation from this inexorable repetition of combinations and dissolutions. Let each one 'arise' and look forward, look ahead, to the beyond, to what happens to him or her after death. Far from becoming hair-splitting intellectual manipulation or unthinking dogmatic formalism, religion will signify realization through manifestation of divinity and spirituality. Let each one 'awake' to one's goal, purpose, and meaning in life's endeavours, awake to the attainment of the fulfilment of one's duties and the honest and honourable discharging of one's responsibilties. And let all strive after and struggle for perfection, neither stopping nor slackening efforts until the desired goal is reached.

Human nature is not seldom lazy and obtusely conservative. It refuses to undergo any effort that involves strain, even for the sake of more comfort or greater progress. Any principle or practice that presents a low ideal which can be reconciled with narrow-minded selfish interests, can only lead to general decay and degeneration of the individual, disabling him from being a useful member of the family of man. Mere good intentions and a host of slogans, ideologies, and written-down mottos cannot achieve the aspirations of an individual or group unless the persons concerned are prepared to work hard with devotion, dedication, and determination. Discipline—that much misunderstood word—is essential to spiritual practice as much as to material happiness and social order. Discipline, in its best form as a self-organized soulful way of life, is the minimum homage that selfish man can pay to the environmental empathy that surrounds him so hospitably. When we are able to render our activities as offerings to the Divine ever present in other beings, we naturally do such actions, think such thoughts, and utter such words as are worthy of the Divine. Consequently our fellow-beings benefit from our benevolent thoughts, words, and deeds.

But success in our efforts requires not only such purity, patience and perseverance, but also, coupled with these, Faith, Reason and Inspiration. The struggle for freedom, which in its various forms and phases becomes the motive and goal of the universe, attains its highest expression in man's conscious assertion and action in that direction. Swami Vivekananda tells us : 'This freedom is attained by the threefold means of—work, worship, and knowledge. (a) Work—constant, unceasing effort to help others and love others. (b) Worship—consists in prayer, praise, and meditation. (c) Knowledge—that follows meditation.'[5] Manliness, even more urgently than saintliness, is what the world is waiting for. Social and political systems are helping and can continue to help human progress, provided they do not tend to circumscribe and stultify the enobled excellence of the spirit of man. These, however, are not by themselves enough to give the individual all he needs for his tensionless tenure of existence. The incompetence of reason and the rational process, in addition to the dehumanization and fragmentation of otherwise wholesome personalities, have only served to increase and enlarge the need for religion, and our appreciation of the extent of the moral and spiritual content of that great and ancient human institution. Speaking on this subject of what religion can accomplish for the good of mankind, Swami Vivekananda says : 'It (religion) brings to man eternal life. It has made man what he is, and will make of this human animal a

5 *Com. Works,* Vol. V (1970), p. 434.

god. That is what religion can do. Take religion from human society and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes.'[6] Let this awaken the youth and the adult alike from their apathy and inertia. Let them strive diligently to reach the goal.

Sincere self-effort is a requisite of every present-day movement for revolutionary change. India's hoary spiritual culture had treasured this principle of progress in its womb from the earliest times known to man. The Vedantic ideal of duty—not as a concept of protean significance but as a specific definitive dedication to life's purpose—calls forth the best in each person by preparing him for the functional responsibilities for which he is naturally and inherently endowed. Recognizing the importance of interdependence between the individual and society, and desiring to promote the healthy development and true welfare of both, the spiritual basis of India's civilization enlarged the scope of man's duty to encompass all of his obligations that are natural, spontaneous, and voluntary.

The right to work, choosing the kind of occupation or profession one likes, is no doubt a legitimate demand. This however has to go hand in hand with the greater and more essential social and national sense of citizenship which calls for selfless service, sacrifice, and sympathy. To help the individual develop as a social being and fit into the social body harmoniously, he has to be trained for those duties and responsibilities (*sva-karma*) for which he has natural inborn aptitude. Duty determined by one's natural bent, in accord with the law of one's own being (*sva-bhāva*), as well as capacity (*adhikāra*) and environmental conditioning (*saṁskāra*), is *sva-dharma*—one's own way of life and action, truly and spontaneously congruous with oneself. Rightly understood and practised, *sva-dharma* makes each man great in his own place and conduces to both material well-being and spiritual growth. The way of prosperity (*abhyudaya*) and the way of supreme (spiritual) felicity (*niḥśreyasa*) are complementary, not contradictory. It is but a process of natural evolution and spiritual unfoldment from the inorganic and the insensate, to the organic and the sensate, thence to the ethical and the unselfish, and finally to the spiritual and the super-sensuous. Arise, O Man, from indolence and delusion (*tamas*) to activity and achievement (*rajas*). Awake, O Man, to serenity and enlightenment (*sattva*). And onward for ever, O Man, towards your goal, and let nothing stop you short of it.

The spiritual ideal is indispensable to right and happy living. The key to man's material as well as spiritual greatness is the triple combination of self-control, charity, and compassion. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* it is said that even as the storm cloud thunders '*da, da, da*', it teaches men, 'Be self-controlled' (*damyata*), 'Be charitable' (datta), and 'Be compassionate (*dayadhvam*). Those of harsh and hateful nature (*tāmasika*) should practise compassion and strive for the goal of non-violence; those of avaricious and predatory nature (*rājasika*) should be charitable and seek to attain non-covetousness and magnanimous generosity; and those that possess a serene and salubrious temperament (*sāttvika*) should yet cultivate self-control at all times and gain the goal of stability, harmony, and tranquillity within and without.

The scientist, the religious devotee, the artist, and the politician—in fact the whole of mankind— recognize one life, one world, and oneness of some type, as their goal, and cherish in themselves a forceful faith needed to achieve that goal. All people should be made to arise and awake, and take to this Truth that each one shall have to manifest and proclaim the glory of one's potential Divine and human excellence, without letting any fear, weakness, or other obstacle stop one from attaining the destined Goal.

6 *Com. Works*, Vol. III (1970), p. 4.

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—XVII

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

20.1.37 :

A young disciple has come from Calcutta to stay for a few days at the feet of Swami Akhandananda. As soon as Baba (Swami Akhandananda) heard that the boy is studying Law, he started by quoting Swamiji (Vivekananda), 'The Bar and religion cannot go together.' Next he began speaking about discrimination and renunciation (Viveka and Vairagya); 'Is there any fixed age or date for death? A child dies, even in the mother's womb. When there is no fixed time for death, why should there be one for calling on God? Moreover, your line is clear. You have no mother, but only a father and two elder brothers. Now it all depends on you—to give up the worldly life or not.'

21.1.37, *Evening*:

The young man was seated near Baba who was saying, 'University education ruins one's commonsense. These are not my words. Sir P. C. Roy himself has said this. Start some new work by your own effort. Translate the *Life of Hsuan-Tsang* (the book Baba was reading at the time) into Bengali. It will be a useful work. Such books are nearer to truth than the Puranas. You can call them History.'

22.1.37 :

Six young men from Manikganj (East Bengal), who were initiated today, were sitting around Baba to hear something from him. Recently Baba had been busy with some rose plants received from Madhupur in Bihar. From the rose-plants arose the topic of 'obedience'. Baba said: 'Even flower-plants listen to the words spoken to them. They understand the language of the heart. It is only men who do not listen to what is spoken to them. A few years back, some new rose-plants were flourishing in the Ashrama. Holy Mother's birthday was approaching. I said to myself, "Oh Mother, I shall adorn you if the flowers blossom in time." Wonder of wonders—a few buds came sprouting up a few days before the birthday. And just on that day, early in the morning, I found five flowers blooming on the plant. In great joy I offered them to the Mother. Swamiji's birthday was just a month later. So again I thought as before; and seven flowers blossomed this time. I was overjoyed. Then I thought, "Will they blossom again at the time of the Master's birthday?" What a wonder! Twelve big flowers were blooming on that day, and those were the last blossoms of the year.'

22.1.37, *Evening* :

Addressing the young disciple from Calcutta, Baba said, 'Haradhan[1] had ten sons. All were lost one by one; none remained. So, you should not aspire after children—what do you say? So many children—all were gone! From where did they come? And where did they go? This coming and going—all is Maya.' Then, pointing to one of the group, he said: 'All the children came back one by one. Even after that, they had to go. This coming back and going again is also Maya.

'Maya is of two kinds—Vidya-Maya and Avidya-Maya; that is, Maya of the Ishwara

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[1] This refers to a well-known story from the nursery rhymes, and here 'Haradhan' was also the name of the young disciple with whom Baba was talking. In the first part of the story all the ten children left home one by one, and apparently died or were untraced. In the second part, to appease the little children, the author brings back all the children one by one even from the jaws of death in an incredible way.

(Sattvapradhana) and Maya of the Jiva (Tamapradhana). Beyond Maya is the undivided Pure Consciousness. Next appears Ishwara with Universal Ignorance or Maya. He is omniscient, omnipotent and independent; then come Jivas with the individual ignorance or Avidya. They are dependent, their knowledge and power are limited. A relevant example is the open sky and the space limited in a room or a pot. In the rooms or in the pots the space seems to be divided or cut up into so many pieces; but it is really not so. The Jiva-consciousness has to go back to Ishwara-Consciousness—to Pure Consciousness—and has to realize its own self. This is the goal (of life). The way is: earnestness, discrimination and dispassion. Dispassion is of various kinds: The dispassion that comes at the cremation ground, and the dispassion resulting out of discrimination. Swamiji was once telling us in the Baranagore monastery: "You see, we shall all be sincere; our dispassion will not be like that of the householders. They also have a kind of dispassion at the cremation ground, when they see the body of a loved one burning to ashes. That dispassion is temporary. It is common to all. But when they go back to their houses, they forget everything, due to Maya. They merge in it. But we have known what the worldly life is. We are not going back to it. It is very well, if we can realize God; but even if we cannot, we are not going back. We shall proceed slowly, sailing onwards. When the wind is favourable, we shall unfurl the sail. When it is against us, we shall stop, but not go back."

'The worldly life is partly God's creation —for instance, this life and the parents; and partly human creation, such as marriage and children. What are all these after all? If you cannot delay the death of your beloved for a moment, or if he or she cannot hold your death for a day, who is he or she to you? Or who are you to them? This is discrimination (Viveka-Vichara).

'Once only, my mind wept for my mother during my travels in the Himalayas. One day I was very hungry, and a motherly lady gave me food and asked, "Why have you left your home? Haven't you your mother?" I got up quickly, sought for a solitary corner, and the above thoughts came rushing into my mind quite spontaneously. In the end, I felt, I was sitting in the lap of my dear Mother—The Universal Mother—for ever and ever. Who else is my mother? The one who cannot hold me for a second, if death wants to snatch me away? For her, I was about to lose my Eternal Mother! You may observe: In the beginning a mother loves the son who has married, but a little later, when she feels neglected, she changes to the other son who has not married, and says, "This son is better." How can you expect peace after marriage? A man of renunciation—how will a man of renunciation be? He will be like a lion struggling to get out of the cage. He gets out of the snare of worldly life. He gets out the moment he feels dispassion for the worldly life of desire and enjoyment. He gets out without any pre-arranged programme or direction.

'God incarnates as man to teach the suffering human beings. Siddhartha, the only son of the old father, was prevented in many ways from going out of the palace. But he got out, to attain Nirvana.

'In the beginning you have to be a pessimist: to feel as if everything is bad—this birth, death, old age, disease—everything of this world is full of misery. With this kind of thinking only, will dispassion come. After self-realization, you will see that everything is good; then you can really love all.

'A beginner, a struggler, and a perfect soul, these are the three stages. The beginner has to exert a little. Later on, that

becomes natural. A handful of young men came to our Master, renouncing everything. Through them, he turned the wheel of Dharma, which is revolving even today. Shankara has said in his *Viveka-Chudamani* that human birth is the highest birth. To attain liberation and knowledge, even the gods have to be born in human form. After that, the love and care of a real Guru is essential. Those who have got this have already gained more than half. But those who do not understand his grace, even remaining with him, are really pitiable. What to speak of them! The path of Jnana-Yoga is very difficult. Where is the body fit for Raja-Yoga? Bhakti-Yoga is easier in this age. Along with that, Karma-Yoga—work in the spirit of worship, remembering Him in every action and surrendering the fruits of every action to Him!'

25.1.37 :

This day also, the talks were directed towards the young devotee from Calcutta. Baba said: 'A lawyer has to earn money by telling lies. He cannot earn even Rs. 25/- (a month) by telling the truth. "__________ " Babu of Berhampur was a bit of a moralist. The first question he would ask the client was, "Is the case true or false?" The client would say, "It is a mixture of both." He would reply, "Then it is not possible for me to take up your case." He had to live his whole life with torn shirts, and his uncle goes to the Court in a Phaeton carriage.

'Vidya (real learning) is that by which Brahman can be realized; and Avidya (ignorance) is that by which desire goes on increasing. Now please tell me which of the two can be attained through the learning of your "Law"?

'Hsuan-tsang—what a man of renunciation! What a seeker after knowledge! What a keen power of observation he had, and how painstaking he was! Crossing the Gobi desert and scaling the Himalayas, he came to India—the land of Buddha—what a great love!

'Excavation work has been carried on in a Mathura monastery, based on a book of Hsuan-tsang's. The measurements tallied exactly with those of the book. How nicely Sarnath has been excavated with its Buddhist monasteries! Bankim Chatterjee and Ramesh Dutt have studied and done much research work also. But then the major portion of research is done by the Westerners. That is how we have come to know of our past. Their books should be translated into Indian languages. This would be a valuable work. This would fetch money also. But all our young men are after the legal profession, or some kind of job.'

Then with great enthusiasm Baba talked of Hsuan-tsang, Fa Hien, and Marco Polo. A few months back he had ordered a book on the life of Hsuan-tsang, by Beal; and he was reading the book with great interest, though his eyesight was failing because of a cataract.

26.1.37 :

Baba was talking about his studies. 'Reading! How much we have read! At night I would be thinking, when would it be day-light? Ah, now I don't see clearly. Previously I wrote pencil notes in the books. Who will see them and who will read? Not one has come to read those minute notes. I have copied the Upanishads and the Yoga-sutras, and then written down notes.'

That very evening his eyes were examined by a doctor from Berhampur.

27.1.37 :

In the morning, as soon as a certain devotee got up after bowing down to him, Baba asked him, 'Have you got to wear the specs day and night?' The devotee replied, 'Yes, they are for constant wear.'

Baba nodded his head and said, 'Yes, constant wear! You have to put them on even at the time of sleep to see dreams!' All present there burst into laughter.

An engineer had come from Berhampur for the construction of a guest-house in the Ashrama. After the necessary discussions ended, Baba continued: 'Today I learnt many things from you. At the age of thirteen or fourteen I went to Paramahamsa Deva (Sri Ramakrishna). From that time till today, I am learning. Even the village chief teaches me so many things, whenever he comes. The Master would teach us how many kinds of women there are. About some, one has to be careful. One cannot have real renunciation unless one has some merit from the previous birth. Dispassion, of the kind seen or felt in the cremation ground, or of the imitation brand, is of no use. It is temporary. Somebody comments or criticizes, and dispassion fades away and you are where you were. We belong to the Master's fold. We are pure and genuine. We do not know any deception in the world of ideas. After reading and hearing the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, I used to think, how beautiful must be the Tapovana (hermitages), and I would imagine myself surrounded by trees bearing fruits and flowers, and fawns playing on the green lawn, birds singing, Sadhus and Munis meditating here and there. From that time onwards, I would run to see Sadhus and ask them, "Where are you coming from? To what places have you been?" They would reply, "Hardwar, the Himalayas, Kailas." I would listen and become silent while thinking of all these places. Sometimes I would follow the Sadhus. They would not take me with them because I was too young. Even at that age, we would go to see Sadhus whenever we would hear that a new Sadhu had come. But I did not have to roam about after the Sadhus much. The Master attracted me. I got the Master. Then I got Swamiji. This was my fulfilment.'

Then to the young devotee from Calcutta, Baba said, 'This time you have a place in my heart. Otherwise, they all come and go. I cannot remember all of them. But I have to pray for all of them whom the Master has brought here—for those who are with me, and especially for those who are far away. What can be done, if these boys (inmates and devotees) do not feel the impulse of dispassion, even after remaining with a Paramahamsa Guru? We were fortunate enough to have good merits from our previous life. We are saved. In how many ways does dispassion come to a man?

'Tulsidas was following the palanquin of his wife, weeping all the way, because she was going to her father's house. The wife was ashamed and rebuked him saying: "Are you not ashamed of what you are doing? Why are you attached to this flesh of mine? Oh, if you could give this love to Sri Rama!" These words were enough for Tulsidas, and he renounced the world and went to Varanasi.

'Then look to Vilwamangal! How much attraction he had for Chintamani, the prostitute. Even before completing his father's Shraddha ceremony,[2] he started for Chintamani's place on a stormy, rainy night, crossed a river holding onto a dead body thinking it was a log; and, scaling a wall by taking hold of a deadly snake which he thought to be a rope, he reached his destination at last. Chintamani became annoyed in the beginning, and then felt pity for him. She said, "Alas, if you had even a fraction of this attraction towards Krishna!" Hearing these words from her lips, Vilwamangal renounced the world and set out for Vrindavan. But such instances are very rare indeed.

'Sheikh Sadi was observing at a well-side,

[2] A ritual performed annually by the Hindus in memory of their departed ancestors.

how the stones in its wall were very slowly being cut through by the rope. At once the thought struck him, why will not my bondage be cut asunder?

'A king asked a sannyasin, "How will the bondage of worldly life be got rid of?" The sannyasin took the king to the hall of the palace and told him, "Catch hold of the pillar." The king did as he was asked. Then the sannyasin said, "Let go the pillar." The king acted accordingly, and the sannyasin remarked, "Thus will the bondage go."

'The Master used to ask, "Who will be a Sadhu?" His answer was, "Certainly, one who can freely drop himself down from a palm tree." Is it so easy to become a Sadhu? It requires much courage, complete surrender to the will of God, and renunciation of everything for the sake of God. All these are necessary.'

Br. Parama Chaitanya (Mr. Phillips) of Ananda Ashrama, California, had been called back by Swami Paramananda. But he was very happy here with his work and meditation. Baba had heard many things about America from him. In this connection, he had a letter drafted as follows:

'Dear Paramananda,

'You are working in America for the last thirty years. Can you say that you have done anything new after Swamiji? Have you been able to touch the society? Swamiji wanted exchange of ideas and men.

'He himself brought three or four persons to India, and sent an equal number to the West. But after that, what? We have sent about twenty of our intelligent, educated young men for the service of that country. How many has that country sent for the service of India? What is the harm if Parama Chaitanya remains here and works for India? He is a practical technician and we need such men here.

'Another point I learn from him is that America does not mean all prosperity. There are many poor men there, and there is no end to their miseries. They live in tears. They remain without food when they are without jobs. Cold wind in winter endangers their lives in the log cabins. What have you done for them? If it were good for that country, I think, I would have plunged into service of those people.

Yours affectionately,

A'

(To be concluded)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S DISCOVERIES ABOUT INDIA—III

SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

(iv) *A New Social Philosophy for Uplifting the Masses*:

The problem of poverty in India is complicated by the fact that it is closely connected with caste. The poorest people in India belong mostly to the lower rungs of society. So, in India, uplifting of the masses naturally amounts to social uplift. Otherwise, education and wealth will only lead to the creation of greater social tension, as recent history of India has shown. What India now needs is a new social philosophy, a new 'ethos of the people', where every man can find the dignity of the individual, equal opportunity for work and for self-development. According to Swami Vivekananda, the Vedantic doctrine of the potential divinity of man alone can provide this. We already have the right philosophy here; but it has never been properly applied to solve the social problems.

Originally, caste in ancient India was,

according to Swamiji, a purely social institution, a kind of trade guild, which later on got identified with religion. When society was being stratified according to temperament and work (Guna and Karma), Vedic religion was being developed, and it was but natural that these two processes became identified. As a result, the ancient Aryans viewed society as a single Sahasrashirsha Purusha [Cosmic Personality], the Soul of the universe, whose various parts were formed by the various castes. All the castes tried not only to fulfil their own allotted duties but also to maintain the ideal of organic unity. This situation changed later, when kings and empires arose and, with that, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few belonging to the privileged classes. Swamiji did not encourage total breakdown of the caste system, which he knew would anyway be impracticable. He pointed out that what was actually bad about caste was simply the misuse of privilege. He said :

> I must frankly tell you that I am neither a caste-breaker nor a mere social reformer. . . . Live in any caste you like, but that is no reason why you should hate another man or another caste. It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe.[40]

Swamiji did not try, as several modern reformers did, for the abolition of the caste system. Because he knew that any such movement would result in the creation of another caste. This was what happened to the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Lingayats of South India and the Sikhs of the Punjab. Swamiji knew very well that any social reform of Hindu society as a whole has to be achieved within the framework of caste. He had certain original ideas for doing this. Swamiji's ideas about caste may be summarized as follows :

In the first place he believed that the solution to the caste problem lay not in levelling down but in levelling up. Swamiji said :

> Our solution of the caste question is not degrading those who are already high up, . . . but it comes by every one of us fulfilling the dictates of our Vedantic religion, by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal Brahmin. There is a law laid on each one of you, . . . that you must make progress without stopping, and that, from the highest man to the lowest Pariah, every one in this country has to try and become the ideal Brahmin. This Vedantic idea is applicable not only here but over the whole world.[41]

By the word "Brahmin", Swamiji did not mean the average modern Brahmin, but the Brahmin ideal; and he wanted to revive its ancient connotations and make it the social ideal for all the Hindus. Swamiji explains this ideal in the following words :

> Our ideal is the Brahmin of spiritual culture and renunciation. By the Brahmin ideal what do I mean? I mean the ideal Brahmin-ness in which worldliness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present. That is the ideal of the Hindu race.[42]

Do men who embody such an ideal exist? Yes, a few rare souls still exist. A recent example of ideal Brahminhood was Sri Ramakrishna's father, Khudiram Chattopadhyaya. As a young man he forsook all his wealth for the sake of truth and lived a life of austerity, purity and absorption in God-consciousness. His worthy spouse was the embodiment of simplicity and kindness; she would not take her food until she was

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40 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Pb. Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (hereafter *Comp. Works*), Vol. III, p. 194.

41 *Comp. Works*, Vol. III, p. 198.

42 *Comp. Works*, Vol. III, p. 197.

sure there was nobody going hungry in the neighbourhood. The villagers respected Khudiram so much that the shopkeepers and others would stand up when he would come walking along the street. When he was taking his bath in the village pond, nobody would dare to touch the water.

In order to attain this ideal of Brahminhood, Swamiji exhorted all Hindus irrespective of caste, to study the Sanskrit language and scriptures like the Upanishads, and lead a spiritual life. Instead of trying to fight amongst themselves, which would only weaken the society, they should try to acquire the superior culture and spirituality represented by the Brahmin ideal. When Hindus belonging to various strata of society evolve up to this ideal, the differences between castes will dwindle, and may totally disappear one day. This was what Swamiji meant by the 'levelling-*up*' process.

Secondly, he insisted that the higher castes, especially, the Brahmins, should come forward to help in this 'levelling-up' process. The very existence of the Brahmins is possible because of other castes. It is, therefore, the duty of the Brahmins to give the entire Hindu society their contribution. With regard to this Swamiji proclaimed :

> To the Brahmins I appeal, that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries. It is clearly the duty of the Brahmins of India to remember what real Brahminhood is. As Manu says, all these privileges and honours are given to the Brahmin, because 'with him is the treasury of virtue' . . . So this accumulated culture of ages of which the Brahmin has been the trustee, he must now give to the people at large, and it was because he did not give it to the people that the Mohammedan invasion was possible. It was because he did not open this treasury to the people from the beginning, that for a thousand years we have been trodden under the heels of every one who chose to come to India.[43]

The Government of India is now trying to improve the economic condition of people belonging to the lower strata, through reservation of seats for them in colleges and in Government service, by starting free hostels for students and helping them financially. This is bound to raise the economic status of this class of people in society. But this alone cannot ensure social solidarity, as some of the contemporary social movements in South India and Maharashtra have shown. There must be a rise in the social status of the people and this can be achieved only through the acquisition of higher culture. Here Brahmins can act as teachers of religion and impart scriptural knowledge to all members of society. This was what Swamiji wanted them to do.

Thirdly, Swamiji, while admitting the usefulness of caste, demanded the abolition of its privileges. Here he applies the doctrine of the potential divinity of man, saying :

> Caste is good. That is the only natural way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. They should be knocked on the head. If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say, 'I am as good a man as you ; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me, as you have in you.' And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all ; let every one be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.[44] The days of exclusive privileges and exclusive claims are gone, gone for ever from the soil of India.[44a]

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43 *Comp. Works,* Vol. III, pp. 297-98.

44 *Comp. Works,* Vol. III, pp. 245-46.

44a *Comp. Works,* Vol. III, p. 294.

Lastly, Swamiji wished that in future caste would be based upon the temperament and behaviour of the individual. Swadharma (one's own duty) should be based on Swabhava (one's own psychological constitution), as Sri Krishna says in the *Gīta.* In an interesting passage Swamiji shows how each man can manifest the qualities of all the castes. He says :

> As there are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas —one or other of these Gunas more or less—in every man, so the qualities which make a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra are inherent in every man, more or less. But at times one or other of these qualities predominates in him in varying degrees and it is manifested accordingly. Take a man in his different pursuits, for example: when he is engaged in serving another for pay, he is in Shudrahood ; when he is busy transacting some piece of business for profit, on his account, he is a Vaishya ; when he fights to right wrongs, then the qualities of a Kshatriya come out in him ; and when he meditates on God, or passes time in conversation about Him, then he is a Brahmin. Naturally, it is quite possible for one to be changed from one caste into another. Otherwise, how did Vishvamitra become a Brahmin and Parashurama a Kshatriya?[45]

What is most needed at present is that the upper caste people must realize that they have inherent in them, all the qualities traditionally ascribed to lower castes ; and what distinguishes them from the latter is only their birth. This awareness would make the upper castes more sympathetic and considerate towards their less fortunate brethren. It would also enable them to adjust with the new kind of social stratification that is being formed now in the Hindu Society. In other words, castes should be replaced by classes.

(v) *Basis for a New National Ideal* :

The Republic of India has accepted 'Truth alone triumphs' as its motto. This is no doubt a great ideal. But according to Swami Vivekananda the national motto should have been renunciation and service. He said :

> The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.[46]

Renunciation :

The *Bhagavad-Gita* uses the word 'renunciation' in two senses : 1. the total giving up of all obligatory duties, and works with desires ; and 2. the giving up of only the fruits of one's actions and not the actions themselves.[47] The first one, called *Sannyāsa,* is the ideal for monks, and the second one, called *Tyāga,* is the ideal for householders. Although the interpretation of the terms 'Sannyasa' and 'Tyaga' varies among the traditional commentators of the *Gita,* it is clear that what is common to both is the detachment of the self, or *anāsakti.* Without this, *karma-phala-tyāga* (renunciation of the fruits of actions) is not possible, and Sannyasa becomes a mere hypocrisy (*'mithyāchāra'*).

Swamiji has used the word renunciation in the above statement in this sense of 'detachment' and not in the sense of renunciation of the sannyasins. In the first place, such an ideal of total renunciation—internal and external—is impossible for the majority of people. Secondly, Swamiji himself stated that the 'mistake' that Buddha had committed was in flooding the whole country with monks. Buddha stressed only one path, *viz.,* that of total renunciation. Whereas, according to Swamiji, Vedanta opens up a number of paths for the attain-

45 *Comp. Works,* Vol. V, p. 377.

46 *Comp. Works,* Vol. V, p. 228.

47 *vide Bhagavad-Gita,* XVIII, 2 ; III, 17.

ment of liberation. Hence, the word renunciation used by Swamiji must be taken to mean 'detachment' (*anāsakti*).

Service :

For Swami Vivekananda, service is not a mere act of charity ; nor is it merely an expression of human compassion ; but it is a sacred and obligatory social act based on an ontological fact. The soul of man in its pure essence is inseparable from God, and hence every man is in a higher sense God Himself. Any kind of help given to a man is service rendered to God in that form. Service thus becomes, not an obligation, but a privilege ; not a duty, but a right ; not a secular act, but a sacred religious act. Service with such attitude is true worship. Swamiji said :

> It is a privilege to serve mankind, for this is the worship of God. God is here, in all these human souls. He is the soul of man.[48]

By this doctrine of service, Swamiji made religion an important social factor. Thus Vedanta has an important part to play in the social life of modern man. It provides him with a philosophy of social service so much stressed in modern society. By making social service and religious worship identical, Swamiji gave a new meaning, value and power to the scriptural passages such as the one given below, which had for centuries lost their practical significance, and social relevance. It is said :

> Thou art the woman, the man, the boy and the girl ;
> Thou art the old man tottering on his staff ;
> Thou indeed hast assumed all these various forms.[49]

For Swamiji, this was not a mere philosophical doctrine or a noble fancy, but a matter of direct experience. He *saw* the living God all around him. The divinity of man was an essential factor in his world of experience. It was this indubitable realization that welled forth from his great heart in a mighty prayer, unrivalled in its sublimity, intensity and power. He said :

> . . . May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.[50]

It was this direct spiritual experience of the divinity of the human soul that made him proclaim that 'the national ideals of India are renunciation and service'. These are the highest and the best forms of the practical application of Swamiji's doctrine of the potential divinity of man. And it was this Swami Vivekananda's idea of the divinity of man that inspired Gandhiji to call the so-called untouchables of India by the name 'Harijans'.

The Present Need :

'Renunciation and service' were once upon a time the hall-marks of greatness in ancient India. The very term Rishi signified that fact. Not only our ancient saints and sages, but also our philosophers, scientists, doctors, and law-givers were all called by the term Rishi, because of the spirit of detachment and service that pervaded their outlook, and also because of their original discoveries. But gradually this spirit was lost among the majority of Indians and the term 'detachment' became limited to the renunciation of monks alone. The spirit of service was replaced by the 'let the devil take the hindmost' attitude. There were several causes for this, like the conquest of

48 *Comp. Works,* Vol. I, p. 424.
49 *Shvetashvatara Upanishad,* IV, 3.

50 *Comp. Works,* Vol. V, p. 137.

India by the foreigners, and the internecine wars among kings and local chieftains. This brought about great unsettlement in Indian social life; and the spirit of free enquiry, the spirit of detachment and service ceased to be the national characteristics.

It is this lack of the spirit of detachment and service that is at present the bane of the educated people of India. This is surely one of the reasons, why, in spite of training a large number of scientists and teachers; and in spite of spending enormous money on fundamental research, which the nation can ill afford now, we have hardly made any original scientific discoveries, or any spectacular technological innovations proportionally. This is also one of the reasons, why social reforms and improvements are going on at snail's speed. A refined kind of materialism, in the form of clinging to sense enjoyments and love for leisure, lack of moral integrity and intellectual alertness, has become widely prevalent among the educated classes of modern India. Swamiji pointed an accusing finger at this section of people when he declared:

> So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them![51]

Many in India know how to show indifference and apathy towards others in the name of pious detachment. True detachment, however, is detachment towards oneself, detachment from one's passions, whims and fancies, and all forms of selfishness; and this is what we lack today. That is why Swamiji puts service side by side with renunciation. Otherwise, in the name of detachment, the grossest form of selfishness could be practised.

The impersonal love for knowledge, and the readiness to help the fellow beings, which we find in the great scientists and social workers of the West, are a reflection of the spirit of true detachment and service enshrined in the Hindu scriptures. Now we have to awaken and cultivate in ourselves this ancient spirit and infuse it in scientific research, in technology, in business, in teaching, in nursing, in village improvement, in social uplift and in all walks of life. Without a minimum of this spirit of selflessness and service, India cannot rise or attain greatness in any field.

(To be concluded)

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51 *Comp. Works*, Vol. V, p. 58.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMAGE FOR MODERN MAN

PROF. LETA JANE LEWIS

Swami Vivekananda's great gift to East and West was an image of man as transcending and removing the apparent limitations which cause his own suffering. For Swami Vivekananda, this image became a matter of the most intensely convincing personal experience during the years between 1881 and 1886 when he was a young man closely associating with Sri Ramakrishna. Although he did not at first know what to make of this unusual saint, whose every pore seemed permeated with divine consciousness, Swami Vivekananda was profoundly attracted to him. 'You see,' he pondered in a letter to a friend, 'you do not understand. I myself do not understand. No, even I do not understand, but I love that old man, that saint, Sri Ramakrishna.' Time and time again

he watched Sri Ramakrishna become completely absorbed in the blissful divine Ground of the universe and then open his ecstatic eyes to see that same divine Ground pervading the world as the Self of all. Drawn by the compelling magnetism of Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful spiritual love, Swami Vivekananda experienced a gradual elevation of consciousness, which culminated in the highest, non-dual absorption shortly before Sri Ramakrishna's death. In this unitive consciousness, which taught him that his own Self and all other 'Selves' are one in the divine Ground, Swami Vivekananda discovered man's true identity. He learned that, since all are essentially divine, the ordinary image which equates humanity with the body, the mind, and the senses, is illusory and false. At that time when he did not realize that he had a mission to 'preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life', he might have been tempted to give up the world in the absolute consciousness whose bliss is infinitely sweeter and more compelling than any earthly joy. Realizing this, Sri Ramakrishna had admonished him to forgo his own happiness for the sake of the many to whom he would later bring happiness and release from pain. 'Now then, the Mother has shown you everything,' he explained, 'Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had be locked up and the key will remain with me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure-box will be unlocked again; and you will know everything then just as you do now.'

It was, however, only after he had encountered helpless tragedy and grief that Swami Vivekananda fully realized the necessity of temporarily renouncing his own salvation for the welfare of others.

After the passing of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and his brother monastics practised intense spiritual disciplines with the purpose of establishing themselves in the deep spiritual consciousness which their guru's overpowering holy presence had naturally communicated to them. In order to devote himself entirely to meditation, Swami Vivekananda even renounced what little comfort and security the drastically impoverished monastery could afford him and wandered from one end of India to the other relying solely upon the Lord for food and shelter. His warm, compassionate heart, which had mellowed with divine love in Samadhi, almost broke at the thought of the great recurring famines which took the lives of millions of his fellow countrymen. He grieved to see that abject poverty, plague, and disease made life a burden for the poor ignorant masses. 'I travelled all over India,' he wrote. 'But, alas, it was agony to me to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty of the masses....'

He likewise found suffering in the West when he came to Chicago for the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. Here he was saddened to discover that life can also be desperate and tragic even for those who appear to have everything they want. He saw that our Western despair originates in an image of man which equates him with the body, the mind, and the personality rather than with the spirit. Because we generally assume that the self depends upon the body for its existence and, therefore, cannot survive it, we are very much afraid of death. Yet not all Westerners look upon death as the greatest of all possible evils. Many fear the extinction of the ego as a kind of living death to be dreaded even more than total destruction. For example, not a few businessmen who identified themselves too closely with financial success, committed suicide upon losing their fortunes in the stock market crash of 1929.

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India by the foreigners, and the internecine wars among kings and local chieftains. This brought about great unsettlement in Indian social life; and the spirit of free enquiry, the spirit of detachment and service ceased to be the national characteristics.

It is this lack of the spirit of detachment and service that is at present the bane of the educated people of India. This is surely one of the reasons, why, in spite of training a large number of scientists and teachers; and in spite of spending enormous money on fundamental research, which the nation can ill afford now, we have hardly made any original scientific discoveries, or any spectacular technological innovations proportionally. This is also one of the reasons, why social reforms and improvements are going on at snail's speed. A refined kind of materialism, in the form of clinging to sense enjoyments and love for leisure, lack of moral integrity and intellectual alertness, has become widely prevalent among the educated classes of modern India. Swamiji pointed an accusing finger at this section of people when he declared:

> So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them![51]

Many in India know how to show indifference and apathy towards others in the name of pious detachment. True detachment, however, is detachment towards oneself, detachment from one's passions, whims and fancies, and all forms of selfishness; and this is what we lack today. That is why Swamiji puts service side by side with renunciation. Otherwise, in the name of detachment, the grossest form of selfishness could be practised.

The impersonal love for knowledge, and the readiness to help the fellow beings, which we find in the great scientists and social workers of the West, are a reflection of the spirit of true detachment and service enshrined in the Hindu scriptures. Now we have to awaken and cultivate in ourselves this ancient spirit and infuse it in scientific research, in technology, in business, in teaching, in nursing, in village improvement, in social uplift and in all walks of life. Without a minimum of this spirit of selflessness and service, India cannot rise or attain greatness in any field.

(To be concluded)

51 *Comp. Works,* Vol. V, p. 58.

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Although almost all Western self-images

are based upon the assumption that man's nature is a combination of physical and mental elements, they vary considerably from person to person because no two people have the same values. Thus, one person may glory in his physical strength without understanding how another can believe his intellect to be his most praiseworthy feature. An ambitious man who measures success in terms of social or political prominence may not appreciate the more modest person who prides himself on being able to repair a car, bake a cake, or play the guitar. And the self-seeker who flaunts a luxurious home, a big car, and expensive clothes may look disdainfully upon the neighbour whose self-esteem is based on being an upright member of society.

Further, Western self-images are almost invariably composed of a variety of disparate elements, and since injury or even the threat of injury to any of these elements will cause anxiety and pain, we are all almost certain to suffer sooner or later in one way or another. Indeed, our potentiality for suffering is so great that we are very fortunate if relative happiness continues for any length of time. A crippling disease may destroy our strength and beauty ; failure may ruin our prestige ; a successful competitor may make us feel inadeqate and inferior; disparaging remarks may threaten our self-esteem; love may be withdrawn; or even as frequently happens, we may fall prey to guilt feelings with no discernible legitimate reason.

Swami Vivekananda saw how much occidentals thus suffer because the finite self, which we take ourselves to be, is hurt or threatened. The glamour and apparent gaiety of our social life did not fool him. 'Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter;' he sorrowfully reported, 'but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface : really, it is full of tragic intensity.'

From his own experience of the divinity of man, Swami Vivekananda understood that, by entering into the unalloyed blissful consciousness which is the essence of our being, both the East and the West could sooner or later overcome the tragic, futile suffering caused by the false identification with the body, the mind, and the personality. Knowing with certainty that he was the absolute Atman, which can never suffer harm, the Swami himself was completely fearless and strong. In his *Life* it is written that one day he 'picked up two pebbles in his hand and said, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as that," and the stones struck one another in his hands, "for I *have* touched the feet of God." ' Since harsh, cruel words directed at Swami Vivekananda found no target, no ego to wound, they passed him harmlessly by. He took the little personality, to which most people cling with stubborn, life-and-death tenacity, no more seriously than objects mirrored on the calm surface of a lake. Such mirrored objects may look as real as the actual objects, the hills, houses, and trees upon the shore, but a rock thrown into the water will shatter the illusion and reveal the deep lake, which, like the divine Self, quietly exists beneath the apparent, but actually non-existent, surface phenomena hiding it from view.

Swami Vivekananda taught that everyone could realize his divine nature and become fearless and strong. 'You may invent an image through which to worship God,' he exclaimed, 'and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.' The denial of the divinity of man was atheism to him. 'As

certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so, the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism.' 'Have faith in yourselves and stand upon that faith,' he admonished. Again: 'Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest, and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

Swami Vivekananda emphatically protested that 'the greatest error is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature....' For him the worst so-called sin was to identify oneself or others with the evil in the surface personality rather than with the Self; he thought nothing more wicked and destructive than to condemn anyone to feel and act the part of the guilty sinner. Thus, his conception of forgiveness involved forgetting the offender's misdeeds and concentrating so much on his virtues that he too begins to outgrow any painfully negative self-image which would stand in the way of spiritual growth and better patterns of action. Swami Vivekananda insisted that everyone is destined at some time or other to plunge far beneath the faults and weaknesses of the illusory surface personality and discover the Self. When the individual thus realizes his spiritual identity, the ego will fade into nothingness. Then all errors, the so-called sins, committed by the cast-off personality will appear as unreal and fleeting, as images mirrored on the surface of a lake.

Although Swami Vivekananda knew from his own highest experience that the evil in human nature lacks ultimate reality, he realized that, for the person living in ignorance of the Self, it is a potent force to be reckoned with. Because selfish action strengthens one's erroneous identification with the ego and obstructs divine awareness, self-analysis with the purpose of eradicating one's evil tendencies is essential for the growth of spiritual conciousness. The spiritual aspirant should face and accept himself without either excessive self-condemnation or self-praise, both of which, being egotistical, would strengthen his identification with the limited human personality. Being dissatisfied with oneself does not necessarily involve self-hatred. And honest self-acceptance does not imply self-satisfaction. Self-dissatisfaction without self-condemnation is divine discontentment, the unspoken prayer which, by rousing the divinity within, gives the individual the strength to overcome his weaknesses. Since righteous action, unlike wrong-doing, weakens the identification with the body, the mind, and the personality, it facilitates Self-knowledge. And since, in addition, it is easier to act on positive principles than on negative ones, Swami Vivekananda asked his disciples to cultivate the virtues which would displace the faults they were struggling to overcome.

Swami Vivekananda taught that it is very important, for those who wish to cast off their identity with the finite personality, to discriminate between the Real and the unreal, between the Self and the transient ego, and he described how we can grow in positive awareness of our higher nature by concentrating upon the divine in that embodiment which appeals to us most. We can realize our own divinity by experiencing the conciousness of a great holy person, perhaps a Buddha or a Jesus Christ, in our most intense concentration. Although we may think that such a holy person can exist only outside ourselves, the experience of his consciousness must, nevertheless, take place within our own consciousness, which, then may gradually be assimilated to his.

Worship and prayer, ritual and meditation, are some of the means by which we can fix our attention upon the divine ideal and come to feel its presence. Holy concentration need not be confined, however, to the church or temple or even to the hour of meditation. Swami Vivekananda taught and showed by his own example that we can practise constant recollectedness in the midst of the most intense activity if we dedicate ourselves and our work to the Lord in the form we love best. This constant recollectedness of the presence of God, the essence of whose being is love, would automatically inspire us to the holiest form of worship, that is, to the loving service of the divine in others, especially in the stricken and down-trodden. Swami Vivekananda had no praise for the spiritually ignorant ascetic, who, hardened to human suffering, would retreat to the Himalayas to spend his time in self-centred austerities. 'The best way to serve God,' he exhorted his disciples, 'is to serve the needy, to feed the hungry, to console the stricken, to help the fallen and friendless, to attend and serve those who are ill and require service.'

Swami Vivekananda laid great stress on the fact that all can practise spiritual disciplines with divinity as the focal point. It makes no difference whether one is rich or poor, a monk or a householder. Even a slave can be a Karma-yogi. Knowing one's divine identity is the only perfect freedom, and a slave may have that freedom. Seeing the divine both in himself and in his master, a slave could love his master without fear. With such an attitude, a slave could work a transformation in his master, who, seeing himself through his slave's eyes, might discover a new identity.

Although Swami Vivekananda did earnestly 'preach unto mankind its divinity' in lectures, classes, and books, his most effective communication of this message was not verbal. Looking beneath the surface personality, he saw the divine in others so vividly, so worshipfully, that they could hardly avoid experiencing it. Many who had no idea of their higher potentiality began to express a holiness which they had never before associated with themselves.

Swami Vivekananda used every means in his power to impress upon modern man a new image in which to find fulfilment and the elimination of suffering. He earnestly pointed out the means for its realization and luminously illustrated his message by his own life which had become transparent to reveal the divinity of man in all its splendour.

The human reason—or rather, the human soul insofar as it is rational—is truly the temple of Almighty God, where he is chiefly found to dwell. "Search I made for you around me," said St. Augustine, "but failed to find you. Within all the time, your dwelling place."

—*St. Francis De Sales*

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: SWAMI NIRANJANANANDA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

One afternoon there appeared three persons at the Rani Rasmani's temple of Kali at Dakshineswar, to see the Paramahamsa Ramakrishna, whom the great Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen so much revered. Two of them, rather elderly, had accompanied a young man of about twenty. He was tall, handsome, and with a crop of curly hair on his head. His princely bearing was quite impressive; his eyes were beaming with courage and joy. Though quiet in nature, he was an energetic youth possessing unusual talents. He had clairvoyant powers and was used as a medium by a group led by Dr. Pearychand Mitra of Ahiritola, Calcutta, in their sittings with the planchette. He was also an acknowledged connoisseur of brave deeds, himself endowed with great courage and strength. In addition, he was well known for his piety and kindness, particularly towards the poor and usually neglected people. The young man and his companions had come to see the Paramahamsa, who, they had heard, possessed great spiritual powers. They were not aware perhaps that the Paramahamsa had a special power by which he could see through a man and know his psychological constitution. As his eyes fell on the young man, the Paramahamsa softly remarked, 'Ah, a fine boy, he is guileless.'

The group expressed a desire to use Sri Ramakrishna as a medium for their planchette. Childlike and innocent as he was, the Paramahamsa readily agreed to act accordingly, and took his seat on a chair. They tried to mesmerize him, but however hard they tried, they failed to cast their spell on him; he remained calmly seated throughout, sometimes looking at them with a smile. It seems, he sensed something wrong in their experiment, for soon thereafter he refused to continue. Disappointed, a senior member of the group remarked, 'You are an extraordinarily stubborn person indeed. We have failed to mesmerize you.'[1] The Paramahamsa on the other hand, had discovered in the young man an advanced spiritual aspirant with qualities to which his companions were blind. More than that, he knew that the young man was one of those select few who were to carry out later his noble mission for the spiritual uplift of humanity. The Paramahamsa was the greatest spiritual giant of his time, whom leaders of many religions and sects adored. He attracted all who came in contact with him—child or grown-up man, ignorant or scholarly—as the magnet draws steel. And the young man was Nityaniranjan Ghosh (later Swami Niranjanananda) who was identified by Sri Ramakrishna as a Nityasiddha, an ever-perfect soul born for the good of others.

Born, probably about the year 1862[2], in Rajarhat-Vishnupur, a village in the 24-Parganas (West Bengal), Nityaniranjan Ghosh (usually called Niranjan) was reared in an aristocratic middle class family in a typical orthodox atmosphere. His father

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[1] *Tattvamanjari* (Bengali), Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 94.

[2] His exact date of birth is not known. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M', translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1947), p. 980, it is mentioned that his age (in April 1887) was about 25 years. On the strength of this evidence Swami Gambhirananda has mentioned Swami Niranjanananda's probable birth year as 1862—In his *Sri Ramakrishna Bhaktamalika* (Udbodhan, Calcutta-3, 3rd edition, p. 226). The date of his birth on Shravana-Purnima has not been definitely ascertained yet.

was Ambikacharan Ghosh and his maternal uncle was Kali Krishna Mitra, a renowned Sanskrit scholar of Barasat (West Bengal). His other maternal uncle, Rajkrishna Mitra, was a renowned homoeopath.[3] Little is known about the details of his early life, but being born with the characteristics of Sri Ramachandra inherent in him—as Sri Ramakrishna later pointed out—Niranjan was, in childhood fond of playing with bow and arrows, swords and so on. For better education he was sent to Calcutta, where he stayed with his uncle Kalikrishna Mitra, at Ahiritola. He did not have so much interest in his studies as for the activities of the spiritualists narrated earlier. As a sensitive medium for the group of spiritualists, Niranjan became possessed by spirits and developed a psychic power to heal the sufferings of people. However, his mind became troubled when he perceived the futility of wealth and worldly pleasures, in the life of a rich man who had come to him for help. This man had been suffering from insomnia for eighteen years, and had come to him for help. Niranjan used to say later that he did not know if he had been able to cure the man, but the immense sufferings of the man in spite of his wealth, made him realize the emptiness and futility of all earthly possessions. He began to feel that this hobby was leading his nowhere except making his mind as well as his body weaker. This hobby came to be outweighed by the dormant fire of spiritual fervour in him, which the intuitive knowledge of Sri Ramakrishna could easily recognize at their very first meeting.

This most important event in Niranjan's life occurred, when he was about twenty years old (and not at the age of eighteen, as it is claimed by some). It was on the day, when he had come for the first time to see Sri Ramakrishna and had tried the psychical gimmicks on him. It was some time in the early part of 1882.[4] A few other visitors were also present near Sri Ramakrishna on that day. Among them, Niranjan was definitely a distinguished personality. About his physical appearance Sri Ramakrishna later remarked that not only Niranjan's eyes, but his entire person was expressive of his noble qualities.[5] He naturally attracted everyone's attention. Regarding him, the Master had observed that Niranjan was 'absolutely guileless.'[6] He had 'a masculine nature'.[7] 'Look at Niranjan. He is not attached to anything. He spends money from his own pocket to take poor patients to the hospital.'[8] About his spiritual status,

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[3] Vaikunthanath Sanyal : *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita* (Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Calcutta-12), p. 312.

[4] It is traditionally believed that Niranjan's age was only eighteen when he first met Sri Ramakrishna. To quote one source, 'Niranjan . . . followed Baburam in order of succession . . . He was 18 years of age when he had his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna.'—Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and his Disciples*, Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California, p. 93.

Swami Gambhirananda has discussed in detail the probable date of Niranjan's first meeting (*vide* his article on 'Tyagi Bhaktader Sri Ramakrishna Samipe Agaman', Udbodhan, Vol. 52, No. 10, p. 522). He has fixed the first part of 1882 as the probable time of meeting. If we should accept the age of 18 for his first meeting with the Master —and that he was born in 1862—the meeting would have occurred some time in 1880, which is not acceptable. According to Swami Saradananda's *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, the first meeting took place some time after 1881. Again, 'M' writes, 'Towards the end of 1881 and the beginning of 1882 came Narendra, Rakhal, Bhabanath, Baburam, Balaram, Niranjan, M, Jogin'. (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* according to 'M', 4th Ed., Vol. I, Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1924, Introduction, pp. 9-10). Further circumstantial evidence points to the conclusion that the first meeting took place in early 1882, most likely in February.

[5] 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, (1947) p. 465.

[6] 'M', *op. cit.*, 401.

[7] 'M', *op. cit.*, 412

[8] 'M', *op. cit.*, 793.

Sri Ramakrishna remarked that it was "rather exceptional".[9]

On the first day, after the spiritualists' experiments were over, Sri Ramakrishna resumed his religious talk for the devotees who had assembled there. With his child-like gaiety which was so much a part of his being, the Master held the audience spell-bound by his rapturous discourse on the life divine. The splendid spiritual truths expressed in homely parables and fables easily touched the hearts of all. It seemed that he was diving deep in divine consciousness; in fact he was most of the time in a state of spiritual ecstasy. The Master was then about 46, and was known as a great figure and the main-spring of the spiritual regeneration that was then sweeping over the country. Niranjan was deeply impressed by the Master's personality; but it was nothing as compared to what the Paramahamsa did and said to him some time later.

The sun was about to set. The charm of of the Paramahamsa's religious discourse was still in the atmosphere, when some of the visitors became conscious that they have to go back home. Kind and sympathetic as he was, Sri Ramakrishna tried to find room in the boats or carriages hired by others, for his visitors and newcomers who could not afford passage money for hiring transport independently. Every devotee felt himself grateful for the opportunity of obeying some wish of his.[10]

The Master could have easily found some room in a boat for Niranjan, if he had so wished, but he asked him to wait. According to one eye-witness, he lovingly gave Niranjan some sweetmeats to eat.[11] Thereafter he took the young man to one corner of the room and began to talk to him as one of his own. He asked him about his whereabouts. He passionately appealed to him with the words: 'Well, look, if you let your mind dwell on ghosts and spooks, you will become ghosts and spooks. And if you fix your mind on God, your life will be divine. Now which one do you prefer?' 'Of course, to become divine', was Niranjan's prompt reply. In this way, the Master advised Niranjan to dissociate himself from the activities of the spiritualists. Niranjan had had the feeling of something happening; something over which he had no control. He readily gave him word that he would leave the spiritualists. Thus Niranjan fell at once under the charming spell of Sri Ramakrishna.

Then the Master talked with Niranjan for a while and seemed to be pleased with his findings about him. In the course of conversation, he told the young man, 'Look, if you do ninety-nine per cent good and one per cent bad to the householders, they will accuse you. But if you commit ninety-nine offences with regard to God, but do only one act for His satisfaction, He will exonerate you of all blemishes. So wide is the difference between the love of God and the love of man.'[12] Niranjan treasured this advice as a pearl of wisdom. It sank deep down into the recesses of his heart.

Quite satisfied with Niranjan, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'It is getting dark. Please do not go back. Why do you not stay here?' But Niranjan did not agree. Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly pleaded with him and said, 'My boy, it will be quite troublesome for you to go such a long distance. Don't go. Please pass the night here.' Nothing however could alter the young man's decision. Yet this seems to have pleased, rather than annoyed, Sri Ramakrishna. At last he lovingly said, 'All right, you go; but you must visit this place again. When will you

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9 'M', *op. cit.*, 411.

10 Burman Gurudas: *Sri Ramakrishnacharit*, Udbodhan, Calcutta-3, Vol. I, 216.

11 Sen Akshay Kumar: *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Puthi*, Udbodhan, 4th Edn., 318.

12 Chattopadhyaya Chandrashekhar: *Sri Sri Latumaharajer Smritikatha*, Udbodhan, 2nd End., 400.

come?' Niranjan promised to revisit soon, then took the dust of the Master's feet, and left for Calcutta. Enthralled by the love and affection of Sri Ramakrishna, Niranjan perhaps could not even anticipate that all this was just a prelude to further great happenings in his life.

Niranjan started for home, but his mind was dragging him to the Master : he kept thinking that he should have stayed at Dakshineswar ; but again he also thought that he had done the right thing in returning, else his uncle would have been greatly annoyed. But Niranjan had understood that Sri Ramakrishna loved him. He was now a changed man.

In fact, the Master had stolen Niranjan's mind so much that he occupied all his thoughts. The young man passed his time restlessly till, after a couple of days, he came to Dakshineswar again. It was almost dusk, when he appeared at the entrance of Sri Ramakrishna's room. As the Master's eyes fell on the young man, he rushed up, lovingly embraced him, and with warm feeling said, 'Oh, Niranjan, time is fleeting, when will you try for God-realization? The days are running fast, and if you do not attain God your life will turn out to be useless. Please tell me when you will strive for realization ; when will you fix your mind on the lotus feet of God? I am anxious for you, really.' Mute with amazement, Niranjan brooded, 'Strange indeed ! Why should he be so anxious because I have not realized God? Who can this man be?' The words of Sri Ramakrishna shook him to the very marrow. The Master's deep concern and tenderness made him feel within himself the deep longing for the realization of God. He was completely won over. He felt that Sri Ramakrishna was his very own—so much so that this time the Master did not have to coax him to stay overnight. In fact, he spent three days with him in great joy. Truly has one biographer of Sri Ramakrishna observed, 'Niranjan needed no argument. Sri Ramakrishna himself was to his mind a supreme reason for choosing the religious life and God above all else.'[13]

Now there opened up for Niranjan a hitherto unknown world of infinite dimensions—the world of divine knowledge. To the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, Niranjan was already known as a Nityasiddha. 'The Nityasiddha is a class apart. He is like *arani* wood. A little rubbing produces fire. You can get fire from it even without rubbing. The Nityasiddha realizes God by practising slight spiritual discipline and sometimes without practising any at all. But he does practise spiritual discipline after realizing God. He is like the gourd or pumpkin vine—first fruit, then flower.'[14] He used to say further 'Their spiritual consciousness has been awakened since their very birth. They assume human bodies only to impart spiritual illumination to others.'[15] The principle behind their spiritual practices, explained Sri Ramakrishna, lies in only knowing who Sri Ramakrishna really was, who they themselves were, and what their relationship was to the Master.[16]

In the group of young devotees who constituted the inner circle of Sri Ramakrishna, Niranjan with his strong physique, religious fervour, courage, enthusiasm, ever-readiness for service, his guilelessness and self-sacrificing spirit, soon became a prominent figure. One day, while in ecstasy Sri Ramakrishna touched Niranjan. The touch brought him wonderful mystical experiences. With the resplendent vision of light before him, he could not close his eyes for three days. He repeated the holy mantra without a break. The Master humourously told Niranjan, 'Now has descended on you a spirit—the spirit of the divine. However hard you may try, you

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13 Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples,* 93.

14 'M', *op. cit.*, 438.

15 'M', *op. cit.*, 115.

16 *vide* 'M', *op. cit.*, 412.

cannot get rid of it.'[17] Years later (in July, 1885) Sri Ramakrishna said about Niranjan, 'I see him seated on a light'.[18] Niranjan always remained close to Sri Ramakrishna, except for a brief period, when he had to accept a job with an indigo-planter at Murshidabad, to maintain his widowed mother. While the spiritual bud in Niranjan gradually blossomed in varied hues and fragrance, its outward manifestations also took interesting forms. As days rolled on, he fell more under the loving spell of Sri Ramakrishna, and one day he confessed to his Master, 'Formerly I loved you, no doubt, but now it is impossible for me to live without you.'[19] Any attempt to portray the unique relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and Niranjan merely uncovers more facets of the wonderful nature of the Master. This relationship gradually opened up new avenues in the life of the disciple, making him a fit instrument to carry out the mission of his great Master.

Niranjan served his Master in his own way, as much as his any other brother-disciple; and after the passing away of the Master he zealously worked under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda. After his sannyasa ceremony, he was named Swami Niranjanananda. Towards the end of his life, he stayed at Kankhal, where he fell a victim to cholera, dying on May 9, 1904 (or 27 Vaishakh, 1311[20] according to the Bengali calendar.)

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17 Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, 400.
18 'M', *op. cit.*, 793.
19 'M', *op. cit.*, 923.
20 *Udbodhan*, Vol. VI, No. 11, 346.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XVI

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Success in spiritual life depends on your ability to cultivate the right mood and to relax. You cannot hold on for long with your mind in tension and conflict. Learn to relax your body and mind by opening yourselves to the Divine who is not only in you but in all. Try to see the Divine in all and be friendly with all. Hatred and spiritual life never go together. Sometimes thoughts about the past keep us in tension. Do not brood over past events. Place them all before the Divine and seek His grace and protection. The light of His grace can destroy the effects of the past. Do not worry about the future. Have trust in the Divine. If you surrender yourself to Him and keep yourself in a mood of acceptance, you can lead a peaceful life free from tension.

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In the beginning meditation may appear to be a troublesome affair. Instead of providing us peace and relaxation, it may disturb us. All sorts of ideas and pictures and impulses come up from the unconscious. Forgotten or unrecognized memories crop up, as if from nowhere, disturbing our mind. The forms and ideas appear that before us are imaginary but are powerful enough to disturb us. Why so? Because we have developed the natural but unfortunate habit of thinking these forms to be real. If you are unable to think of these thought-forms as illusory, then you should at least imagine that they are all bubbles arising from the Cosmic Mind. Try to see the Divine through all these forms, real or unreal.

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Before you begin your meditation you

must be in a noble and good mood. With a mind burdened with worries, passions, and plans you cannot meditate. Place them all before the Divine and pray sincerely for light and guidance. You may repeat some scriptural passage but prayer is most effective. If the prayer is sincere it will have quick effect in composing your distractions and changing the mood of depression.

An anchored boat does not move from its place. So also, if you have strong attachments or passions you cannot move towards the Divine. Meditation is a mental movement, progression towards the Divine. But this requires the lifting of the anchor.

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Get rid of excessive activity and inactivity. Too many activities make the mind restless. Select two or three necessary activities and try to do them with sincerity and concentration. Concentrated activity is a help in calming the mind. But aimless bustling about, making a busybody of oneself, only shows the restlessness of a monkey. It leads to even more nervousness, and is a great obstacle to meditation. People who cannot sit quiet for a few minutes, how can they hope to meditate? The way we do our work is reflected in the way we will meditate. One who can do his work calmly and with concentration will find meditation more and more easy.

But equally, you should avoid lethargy and laziness which prevent the mind from rising to a higher plane.

What we need is a state of balance—poise in the body and mind. Our body and mind should be in tune with the cosmic rhythm. You can retire into solitude only when you have achieved this attunement. Otherwise solitude itself tends to become a source of trouble.

*

People who are perfectly poised, calm and serene, and who are attuned to the Divine, are very rare indeed. It is a blessing to come in contact with such people.

Try to be as perfect as possible before you die.

*

Resignation is an inner attitude. It is the total response of the mind to Divine Grace. Grace bubbles up from within. But the aspirant must be alert and receptive to it. By constant practice of resignation we become receptive to Divine Grace. Resign yourself as if you were going to sleep. We should try to cultivate in the waking hours the passive state of mind normally experienced just before sleep, but without losing consciousness. Do not let the mind become a void. The soul must feel the Divine. Deep inner relaxation, resignation and alertness are to be cultivated.

May the Divine fill our hearts with His divine Presence!

We must do our business faithfully, without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God mildly, and with tranquillity, as often as we find it wandering from Him.

—Brother Lawrence

HOLY MOTHER SRI SARADA DEVI—I

MR. JUSTICE A. N. RAY

Today we meet to express our joy and happiness on the occasion of the Tithi Puja (Birth Anniversary) of our Holy Mother, Sri Mā Sarada Devi. We are to talk about the life and message of Holy Mother. Mother is infinite. Mother is deeper than the ocean. Swami Vivekananda said, 'You have not understood Holy Mother.' The life and message of Holy Mother is that Lord Ramakrishna and Holy Mother are one and the same. It is said :

Rāmakṛṣnagataprānām,
tannāmaśravaṇapriyām ;
Tadbhāvarañjitākārām,
praṇamāmi muhurmuhuḥ.[1]

Once at Dakshineswar Sri Ma was sweeping the Master's room and Ramakrishnadev was seated on a small bench. All on a sudden Sri Ma asked Ramakrishnadev, 'Who am I to you?' Ramakrishnadev without waiting to think, at once said, 'You are my Mother Anandamayee.' Just as Holy Mother was Jagadamba (Divine Mother) to Lord Ramakrishna, similarly Lord Ramakrishna was the embodiment of all Gods and Goddesses to the Mother. Sometime Holy Mother told a devotee, 'Once I felt, when offering food to Lord Ramakrishna, that I could not even throw out the ants, because I perceived that Thakur Ramakrishna was eating the offerings.' When Sri Sri Ma offered prayers to Thakur Ramakrishna her whole heart was with him. Whenever the Divine descends on earth as Avatar (Incarnation) the primeval Shakti also descends with Him in a female form. That is how Ramakrishnadev and Sri Sri Ma descended upon this earth. So did Sri Krishna and Radhika, Ramachandra and Sita, Buddha and Yashodhara, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Vishnupriya.

The oneness of Ramakrishnadev and Sri Ma can be comprehended from some instances. Before Ramakrishnadev came here, his father had a vision of Vishnu at Gaya. Lord Vishnu told Ramakrishnadev's father that He was coming to him in the form of a son. Before our Holy Mother came to this world her mother going across the field felt a near faint and sat at the foot of a Bilwa tree. All on a sudden there was a noise. A little girl came down from the branches of the tree. She put her hands around the neck of Holy Mother's mother. The little girl said, 'Now I have come to you.' Holy Mother's father once had a dream that a little girl put her hands around his neck. The girl was a paragon of beauty and had precious jewels on her body. Holy Mother's father asked the little girl who she was. She said, 'I have come to you.' These instances show how Ramakrishnadev and *Yogīndrapūjyām yugadharmapātrīm*[2] Sri Ma came to this mortal earth in human body.

When Ramakrishnadev was engaged in great Sadhana, Bhairavi Brahmani came to Dakshineswar and said, 'He who has renunciation, detachment, discernment, knowledge unbroken at all times in spite of the wife being near him, is really established in Brahman.' All of us know how Holy Mother pointed out Ramakrishnadev as her husband when she was a girl of five or six. To understand this we should hear what Ramakrishnadev said when Sri Ma asked him once while she was massaging his feet,

[1] 'I bow again and again to her, whose soul is dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, who is fond of hearing His name, the emodiment as it were of His thoughts.'

[2] 'One who is worthy of being worshipped by the great Yogis ; and a Saviour of religion in every age.'

'Who do you think I am?' Ramakrishnadev said, 'The mother who is in the Temple is now in this body and is living in the Nahabatkhana (the concert room) and is now massaging my feet. I always see you as Anandamayee.'

We understand the life and message of Sri Ma, when we find that Ramakrishnadev worshipped her as a Shodashi. Shodashi is Goddess Tripurasundari—Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva. Once she revealed herself as Tripurasundari to Lord Shiva. When Ramakrishnadev worshipped Holy Mother as the embodiment of all Shakti and invoked Mother Tripurasundari to open all the doors of perception, meditation, emancipation and purity of mind, Holy Mother lost her external consciousness and became Samādhistha (established in Samadhi). It is difficult to explain the word 'Samādhistha' in the case of Ramakrishnadev, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. If one could see God physically it was when Ramakrishnadev, Holy Mother and Swamiji were in that ecstatic state.

We see our Holy Mother as a Mother, as a Guru and as a Goddess. The love and affection of Sri Ma knew and knows no bounds. Sri Ma is supreme in her maternal love and affection. When she was at Dakshineswar, many women came to see her. Once Ramakrishnadev told her in a note of warning about a woman, who came to see Holy Mother, that the woman was not a good woman. Holy Mother realized the significance, but felt that those who came to take refuge at her feet, should not be given up just because something had happened in the past. Holy Mother would be a Mother to all, irrespective of caste, calling, or community. A dacoit, Amjad was as much a son to her as Sharat Maharaj. Could there be a greater manifestation of love than this? Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great dramatist, once said that Durga Puja at his house would not be performed, if Holy Mother would not come there. Holy Mother was then unwell, but she went to Girish Chandra's house, because the son of Girish Chandra wanted her at the time of worship of Mother Durga. When Holy Mother arrived at Girish Chandra's house, Girish Chandra said that Mother Jagadamba arrived in spite of physical suffering. Girish Chandra in full throated voice spoke, while panting for breath, 'I thought there would be no Puja. Then the Mother arrived.' All the time Holy Mother was there, the devotees offered flowers at the lotus feet of Holy Mother.

Holy Mother's love for the devotees was so deep that when devotees would bring sweets, Holy Mother would keep just a little from the front part of the plate for Ramakrishnadev and distribute the rest to all the devotees. Once Gopal's mother said to Holy Mother, 'You are giving away everything. You should keep something for my Gopal,' meaning thereby Ramakrishnadev. Holy Mother became a little embarassed. No sooner had she expressed a little uneasiness, than someone turned up with a basket full of sweets. Holy Mother's hands were always bounteous for the devotees. Instances are innumerable to show selflessness on the one hand and the abiding affection on the other.

Holy Mother was with all her heart for Lord Ramakrishna. Nothing would please her more than hearing the name of Ramakrishna. She was wholly wrapped up in the thoughts of Lord Ramakrishna. She would look after the food of Ramakrishnadev. Sometimes when Ramakrishnadev would be in Samadhi, Holy Mother would gradually bring Ramakrishnadev back to normal consciousness. When Ramakrishnadev would sing and dance in a state of divine ecstasy in his room crowded with devotees, Holy Mother would listen from behind the curtains. Sometimes, she would address herself with these words, 'Mind, have you come with such fortune that you will get His darshan every day?'

Lord Ramakrishna showed great aware-

ness and alertness about Holy Mother. She was then living at Nahabatkhana, which was a very small room. Ramakrishnadev therefore advised her to go out in the afternoon with devotees to see the house-wives in the village of Dakshineswar. This would take Sri Ma out of the room and also give her companions.

As long as Ramakrishnadev's mother was at Dakshineswar, he would go to the Nahabatkhana and eat his mid-day meal there. When Ramakrishnadev's mother left this mortal world, Sri Ma would go to Ramakrishnadev's room and would feed him there. Sometimes Ramakrishnadev had to be brought back from the lofty heights to the mundane world at the time of taking food. When Ramakrishnadev was at Cossipore Sri Ma used to cook for Ramakrishnadev 'Manda', which was a sort of boiled food in the form of pish pash. One morning at Cossipore, while going up the wooden staircase with a large quantity of milk in a cup in her hand, she slipped and fell. Thereafter for a few days she could neither cook nor bring the food for Ramakrishnadev. Baburam, a disciple of the Master, was told by him to bring Holy Mother seated in a basket on his head. These little acts of humour also show the complete unity of Ramakrishnadev and Sri Ma.

One day when Holy Mother was in meditation during her stay at Nahabatkhana, Thakur was returning from the Kali temple. Hardly could he keep steps when he saw Holy Mother and said, 'Am I drunk? Why am I shaking? Why can I not sit?' Holy Mother said, 'You have attained the consciousness of Mother Kali.' The Master used to narrate the divine acts of Sri Krishna to Sri Ma and Lakshmi Didi. One evening Holy Mother prepared a seven-stringed garland of Juin (jasmine) and Rangan flowers and dipped it in water to keep it wet. Later, when the garland was put on the neck of Mother Kali, Ramakrishnadev remarked, 'How beautiful the garland looks on the black body of Mother Kali!' When Ramakrishnadev learnt that Sri Ma had made the garland, he asked the devotees to request her to come and have a look at Mother Kali. Holy Mother's heart became filled with the beatific vision of Mother Kali, when she had a look at Her image.

It is said that when Holy Mother was at Dakshineswar, Ramakrishnadev one day wrote something on Holy Mother's tongue. The next day Mother asked Lakshmi Didi to go to Thakur and have the same written on her tongue. Thakur also wrote the root Mantra of Radha Krishna on Lakshmi Didi's tongue. In those days Holy Mother would look at the moon and say, 'Let my heart be clean like the moonlight.' And so was her life. Well has it been said about her :

Pavitraṁ caritaṁ yasyāḥ,
pavitraṁ jīvanaṁ tathā ;
Pavitratā swarūpinyai
tasyai kurmo namo namaḥ.[3]

Ramakrishnadev once told Golap Ma about Holy Mother, 'Who is Sarada? She is Saraswati. She has come to impart knowledge. She has hidden her beauty.' Sometimes, if Mother would become a little sleepy while listening to Sri Ramakrishna's words of wisdom, as she was then a girl of fourteen, mother's friends would like to wake her up. The Master would say, 'No. Don't wake her up. Is she sleeping on her own will? If she hears these things, she will not stay here. She will just run away.' This is the Goddess that Paramahamsadev saw in her. Again Ramakrishnadev said, 'She is the giver of knowledge (Jñānadāyinī). She is the personification of intelligence. She is my Shakti (Power).'

Once Swami Vivekananda wrote to his brother-monk, 'You have not yet under-

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[3] 'Noble Thou hast a character,
Pure is Thy life divine ;
Ever we bow to Thee, O Mother,
Thou incarnate Purity fine !'

stood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know. Without Shakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour here. Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into the world.'

We see two features in the Holy Mother. One is the Master's desire to train up the Holy Mother for propagation of religion, and the other is the affection of Sri Ma for her spiritual sons—the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Once when the Master went from Dakshineswar to Shyampukur (a suburb of Calcutta), Sri Ma felt worried about him because he was ill. One day Golap Ma told Jogin Ma, 'Look, Jogin, I think the Master has gone to Calcutta being angry with Sri Ma.' No sooner had Sri Ma heard this from Jogin Ma, than she went to Ramakrishnadev at Shyampukur and asked, 'Have you come here being angry with me?' The Master said, 'No, who told you so?' Mother said, 'Golap Ma told me.' The Master said in a rebuking tone, 'Why did she say this and make you cry? Does she not know who you are? Where is Golap?' Then Sri Ma returned to Dakshineswar. Later Golap Ma was rebuked by the Master with these words: 'With what words have you made her cry? Do you not know who she is? Go at once and ask her forgiveness.' Golap Ma walked on foot to Dakshineswar and asked her, crying, 'Mother, are you angry with me? Without realizing the implications, I said these words.' Mother did not say anything, but smiled and then patted Golap Ma on the back; and her sorrow melted in the affection of Holy Mother.

After the passing away of the Master, Sri Ma went to Vrindavan. There she had a vision of Ramakrishnadev. It was the end of the monsoon season: the trees and flowers at Vrindavan were in unparalleled beauty. The area was so full of the fragrance of flowers that one could see the peacocks dancing, the cattle grazing and the deer dancing in joy. Amidst that beauty Sri Ma was comprehending in her mind the tears of Radhika (consort of Sri Krishna) and the long lingering look of the Vraja *gopikas* (cowherd women of Vraja), but there was no Krishna. Mother's mind was full of sadness on that account.

Once a great event happened at Vrindavan. The Master revealed himself to the Mother and said, 'Give this mantra to Jogin (Swami Yogananda).' At first, Holy Mother sat in silence. She thought with a little shyness that people would say that she had started making disciples no sooner the Master left his mortal body. But the Master appeared before her again on the second and the third day. Holy Mother then spoke to Paramahamsadev, 'I do not even speak with Jogin. How can I give him a mantra?' Paramahamsadev then said, 'You ask daughter Jogin (Jogin Ma) about it.' He told the Mother what mantra should be given to Jogin. Then Sri Ma sent for Jogin Maharaj and asked him whether he had been initiated. Jogin Maharaj said, 'No, Mother, the Master did not give me any particular *ishtamantra* (name of the chosen deity). I, however, do japa according to my taste.' Jogin Maharaj also told Mother that he had got a mandate from the Master for receiving mantra from her, but out of shyness he could not speak to her. Then Mother gave initiation to him.

When Holy Mother went to Prayag (Allahabad) for the immersion of the Master's hair, all on a sudden a wave came and took away from her hand the box containing the hair. She said that Prayag, (meaning the presiding deity of the place) wanted to be purified, and that is why the box was taken away from her hands.

(*To be concluded*)

LETTERS OF A SAINT

February 1st, 1897.

Dear Dr. Janes,

I went to Brooklyn last evening and took tea in your family. Your son and his wife joined us and Mr. Webb was there. The children are doing well. Marcia told me she has lost a tooth and another has become loose. That is a new experience altogether and, therefore, she wanted to tell it to me herself.

I received this paper from India this morning. The Editor is a friend of ours. He is a barrister-at-law. His name is N. N. Ghose, Esq. It is a well conducted paper. I think you will be interested to read the state of affairs there from such a paper. It contains an interesting account of Rev. Dr. Barrows' first lecture in Calcutta and the editor's criticism of it too. I think Mrs. Bull would like to see it too. So kindly give the paper to Miss O'Neill when you have finished and tell her to give it to Mrs. Bull when she comes.

My work here is going on smoothly as before and Miss Phillips and others are asking me to come back in May and June, to keep up the interest here. My cordial greetings and prayers for yourself and to all the household.

Ever your friend,
SARADANANDA.

Math, Belur, Howrah, India
November 5th, 1901.

My dear Mrs. Janes,

The news of the decease of our dear friend, your husband, has come to us at last. We could hardly believe it at first. Even now all the dear days that I had the good fortune to pass with the doctor are crowding in my memory and I can hardly express my feelings. I had all hopes of seeing his fatherly face and feeling the warmth of his hand and heart once more; but also he is gone and America has lost one more charm for me. It is ever a mystery why such useful lives are cut away in their prime, while they have hardly done half the good that they would do were they allowed to remain! But none has as yet got a solution to it. All that we can do is to *resign*—resign ourselves to the inevitable—resign, believing there is a purpose all good, underneath it all! But the heart bleeds all the same and each one of such resignation is made at the cost of so much life blood of us. Kiss dear Marcia and Edith for me. My heart is fondly turning towards them in these dark days. For you, what words of condolence can bring light and hope in these days of your sacred sorrow? Perhaps the truth that life is one and death is but a mere change and in life or death we are ever joined with those, whom we dearly love. It is easier to crumble to dust a peak of Himalayas or to turn a mighty current back to its source in the mountains, but not so to stop the flow of true love towards its object—not even death can do it!

With kindest regards and sincere condolence to yourself and love and blessings to dear Marcia and Edith.

Most truly yours,
SARADANANDA.

TO OUR READERS

It is a matter of great pleasure for us to announce that with the dawn of the new year 1977, the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* is entering the eighty-second year of its publication. On this happy occasion, we offer our hearty greetings and good wishes to all our readers, subscribers, contributors, reviewers, advertisers, friends and sympathizers.

As directed by Swami Vivekananda, this Journal has been discharging its duty of imparting to the best of its ability, the knowledge, which can help in bringing about the awakening of humanity at large. This awakening is being brought about in two ways : (1) By arousing the individual soul, by dispelling the stupor of ignorance ; and (2) by awakening the masses so as to make them better human beings and loyal citizens of their nations. In this respect the mission of this Journal is world-wide, even though from its name it appears to be restricted to India alone. We can, however, say that the Journal has a message for the world in general and for India in particular.

Swamiji's love for India is well known ; and so is his heartfelt sympathy for her downtrodden masses constituting the majority of her population. According to Swamiji the awakening of a nation depends upon the awakening of its individuals ; and the awakening of the nations can gradually lead to the awakening of the world as a whole. This will naturally break the walls of separation existing between the nations and ultimately result in Oneness and harmony. Swamiji said :

'When a kettle of water is coming to the boil, if you watch the phenomenon, you find first one bubble rising, and then another and so on, until at last they all join, and a tremendous commotion takes place. This world is very similar. Each individual is like a bubble, and the nations resemble many bubbles. Gradually these nations are joining, and I am sure the day will come when separation will vanish and that Oneness to which we are all going will become manifest.'

Our Journal, we are sure, is bearing from generation to generation the same torch of Knowledge kindled by Swami Vivekananda, and helping mankind to march towards that Oneness.

Besides propagating the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, our Journal contains illuminating articles by learned men on religious, philosophical and other subjects for the interest of general readers—though the views expressed by various writers in their articles may not necessarily be our own. We hope our readers will be benefited by our humble service.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Reminisces: These reminiscences were compiled by Swami Sarveshananda of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, from: 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970), and *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras, 1938). References—*Gospel*: No. 1, p. 505; No. 3, p. 303; No. 5, p. 724; No. 6, pp. 222-3; No. 7, p. 527; No. 8, p. 107. *Great Master*: No. 4, p. 260. *Sayings*: No. 2, p. 315.

Onward For Ever: The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever' are taken from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1958), p. 124.

The Editorial: Blinded by selfishness, men generally become reluctant to the higher values of life. They remain all the while engrossed in attaining the means of their livelihood and thinking of the happiness of their own families. Due to the stupor brought about by the power of self-centredness, they become completely unaware of their duties towards their fellow men and the nation. The ultimate fate of such people, according to scriptures, is suffering and transmigration. They remain completely ignorant about their potential divinity, which is ever pure, ever conscious, and ever free in nature. In order to make the Indians conscious of their duty towards the downtrodden and miserable masses of their nation, Swami Vivekananda feelingfully said in his famous lecture at Calcutta, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the desired end is reached. Young men . . . arise, awake, for the time in propitious. Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it.' And in order to make man conscious of his own potential divinity, the rishi of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* has said almost the same words—*Uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata, prāpya varānnibodhata*. Both these types of awakenings are necessary for every man for his own salvation and for the good of his nation. The Editorial of the month stresses these points in detail.

Swami Vivekananda's Discoveries About India—III: This article had its origin in the notes that the author kept of his series of Sunday discourses given at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore, about a year ago. At the instance of his monastic brothers the unassuming Swami rendered the notes into a treatise. Shuddering at the very thought of publicity, the Swami would not have sent it to us for publication, had he not been constantly prodded by his well-wishing brethren. The readers have already read the first two instalments of the treatise and must have found them original and thought-provoking. In this instalment, the author says that the caste system in India needs a levelling *up* and reorientation. He quotes Swami Vivekananda's words in this connection. He has also tried to remind the readers of the twin national ideals—'renunciation and service' preached by Swamiji. Lest the word 'renunciation' be misunderstood as total renunciation of the world, the writer has often replaced it by the word 'detachment', so that both the householders and the sannyasins will be able to serve their fellow countrymen with that spirit.

Swami Vivekananda's Image for Modern Man: Psychologists speak of the importance of self-image in the formation of human character and personality. As is a man's self-image, so is his growth, attainment, and fulfilment. Swami Vivekananda—enlightened spiritual teacher and prophet that he was—taught every human being to look on himself and others as the infinite, immortal, blissful Ātman, and thus gradually come to

the realization of this fact, because in such realization alone are eternal peace and happiness, which are the true goal of humanity, whether consciously or unconsciously pursued. This message of the spiritual self-image of man, declared originally by the Vedic seers and realized and interpreted by Vivekananda to the modern age, is needed by humanity today more than ever. Prof. Leta Jane Lewis in her learned contribution, 'Swami Vivekananda's Image for Modern Man' highlights this central teaching of Swamiji, against the background of his life and works. The author is Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages, School of Humanities, California State University, Fresno—U.S.A.

First Meeting with Sri Ramakrishna—Swami Niranjanananda: Nityaniranjan Ghosh, who later became Swami Niranjanananda, was one of the direct sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. According to the Master, he belonged to the category of the Nityasiddhas—the perfected souls born for the redemption of mankind. Swami Niranjanananda is well known in the Ramakrishna Order for his strong physique and daring deeds. As a loyal servant of the Master, he helped in propagating the message of Sri Ramakrishna, under the able leadership of Swami Vivekananda. In this article, Swami Prabhananda has placed before the readers his brilliant discoveries, and tried to pinpoint the approximate period of Niranjan's first visit with the Master. Swami Prabhananda, who is at present the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia, had the rare privilege of handling many valuable documents concerning the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, and it is the information collected from these documents which mainly formed the material for his series of original articles published so far. The students of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature will ever remain grateful to him for unlocking this treasure.

Sermonettes at St. Moritz—XVI: This is the last instalment of the series started from the March 1975 issue of our Journal. It had consisted of the notes of Swami Yatiswaranandaji's class talks given at St. Moritz, Switzerland. The late Swami was, in later years of his life, the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, and Head of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore. Prior to that, he had preached Vedanta in Germany, France, Switzerland and the United States. We hope our readers have found the whole series illuminating and interesting.

Holy Mother—Sri Sarada Devi—I: In this month we are publishing the first instalment of the Presidential address delivered on December 28, 1975 on the auspicious occasion of the Holy Mother's Birth Anniversary meeting at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, by Mr. Justice A. N. Ray, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India. In his address Mr. Ray has very beautifully narrated the life and message of the Holy Mother. On reading the address, readers will surely feel how deeply and devotionally Mr. Ray has studied the life and teachings of the Holy Mother—Sri Sarada Devi; and how far he himself has been impressed by her holy personality.

Letters of a Saint: We are thankful to Swami Bhashyananda of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago; and Mrs. Chas. Lyttle of Chicago, U.S.A., for these hitherto unpublished letters made available to us for publication.

We regret that due to unavoidable circumstances we could not publish, as announced before, 'Vivekananda's Message of Dynamic Vedanta' by Swami Yatiswarananda, in this issue.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SOME ASPECTS OF VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY: By Swami Siddheswarananda, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur, Kerala 680551, 1975, pp. viii+318, Price Rs. 8/-.

The book under review consists of lectures originally delivered in two Universities in France, by Swami Siddheswarananda, one of the stalwarts of Ramakrishna Order. They have now been translated from the French, and presented to the English-knowing public. The Swami may not have been personally known to many readers but through this work at least, he will be remembered as a deep thinker with command of a very wide knowledge of all aspects of Indian philosophy and religion. Though the title judiciously aims to limit its scope only to the treatment of 'some aspects' of Vedanta philosophy, yet the book touches on the most significant and dominant aspects of Indian philosophy, and even presents this thought in proper historical setting down through the ages. Addressed primarily to western audiences which had yet to be introduced to Indian culture and philosophy, the lectures consistently avoid being technical, without sacrificing the subtle nuances of metaphysical analysis or the supreme heights of spiritual realization. The way in which concepts and problems are presented here—with appropriate parallels from modern western philosophers and scientists—clears Indian thought from all criticism of being obsolete speculations of the ancients. The lectures bring the readers a new and fresh insight about the way Indian thought should be approached.

Tracing Indian thought from the Vedas and the Upanishads, through the *Bhagavad-gita* to the non-dualistic Vedanta of Sankara, the author gets to the kernel, as it were, and elaborates on it throughout the work. The Swami's conviction about this kernel is obviously that of non-dualism, which is presented in a very systematic way in as many as six lectures out of the eleven in the book. Taking the ontological approach in five of these, the author lays bare in simple yet felicitous language the nature of Reality as *sat, cit,* and *ananda*. In an enlightening section he warns us against imposing ordinary meanings on these terms, and points to their ontological implications beyond rational definition. He shows with unfailing persuasion that the unchanging, immutable principle of Consciousness, which is Being and Bliss, is all that *is* in reality; and the world of plurality and becoming is but empirical, having only a 'factual' reality. Swami Vivekananda's famous exposition of maya as a 'statement of fact' is used to good advantage, and the ordinary criticism of the Advaitic stand regarding the world, that it preaches 'illusionism' is shown to be a misconception due to inadequate comprehension. Besides showing the general philosophical implications of Vedanta for right understanding of Reality, the lectures contain ample instructions for practical religious pursuits. The last one—on *yajna* (sacrifice)—takes the whole of life in its purview and shows how *yajna* in its true sense can give the experience of the Highest Real. Here indeed, Indian religion, inseparable from philosophy, is shown to be a practical way of living.

This book can be a very fine introduction to Indian philosophy, and specially to Advaita Vedanta. Coming as it does from a monk of a very high order, it has a sanctity behind it, besides the authenticity derived from actual living.

The translators are also to be congratulated on their fine rendering of the original into English. There is a rather detailed index; the printing and get-up are good.

Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao
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Hindu Philosophy,
University of Mysore*

PORTRAIT OF GURU: By Swami Iswarananda Giri, Published by Samvit Sadhanayana, Santa Sarovar, Mt. Abu (Rajasthan), 1975, pp. xii+138, Price Rs. 6.50.

The book under review is a fine elucidation of Sri Sankaracharya's *Maneeshapanchakam*. Sankara was a poet of rare felicity, and hence naturally he poured forth his non-dualistic vision of Ultimate Reality in matchless philosophic poetry. Tradition has ascribed this composition to a momentous incident in his life. It brought forth from him a grand statement of the truth of Vedanta, and also his conception of an ideal guru. In developing this new vision, he vigorously emancipates himself from the conventional caste-bound outlook. The present work interprets this brief, great poem of the Acharya in refreshing language, with scrupulous care for details and an elaborate, leisurely presentation of the nature and function of a guru. Much relevant matter outside the strict scope of the poem is brought in appropriately, and the outcome is, to be sure, a sublime portrait of a guru.

Only one critical observation may be ventured. The learned Swami harps again and again on what he calls the 'Samvit way' or 'Samvit technique'. This pathway demands some description with a clear indication of what it stands for. It may be plain and clear to the initiated, but the general reading public is in the dark and is kept so, however interested it may be in fuller enlightenment.

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR
Retired Professor of Philosophy
University of Mysore

MY LIFE AT SRI RAMANASHRAMA : By SURI NAGAMA, (Translated by D. S. Sastri), Published by Sri Ramanashrama, Tiruvannamalai, S. India, 1975, pp. vii+150, Price Rs. 4/-.

Smt. Suri Nagamma is well known in the large circle of Sri Ramana's devotees. Her letters from Ramanasrama are justly famous. Like them, the present work is also a translation from the original Telugu version with minor abridgements. The language of the translation is fine and brings out very well the spirit and personality of the writer. The narrative falls naturally into three phases. The first gives us an idea of the grief and despair of the young widow, who had lost her parents also. The tender concern of the brothers is very touching. How she was in quest of a centre and purpose for her desolate life is movingly portrayed. She is led finally to the feet of Sri Ramana. Like her, we are made to feel that there was a divine dispensation towards that end. In the second phase, the work of the Grace of Sri Ramana is gradually unfolded. She is accepted and shaped into a meaningful personality. She becomes a significant entity, as it were, and active in the manifold services of the Guru. The zest and beauty of devotion become her possessions. The miracle of her becoming an author unfolds, and her ardent work is accepted and valued by the object of her devotion. Then commences the third phase. We come to notice undesirable developments in the structure of the institution that had grown around Sri Ramana. These are minor troubles. But what follows has the magnitude of a calamity. The fatal illness of the Maharshi and the high-handed mismanagement of the treatment, are vividly portrayed. The writer's poignant feelings about all these, move us also. The Maharshi's admirable tranquillity and transcendental unconcern, as well as his evergrowing compassion, are set forth most effectively. This is not a book of philosophy or even of spiritual message. It is a narration by a simple-hearted devotee, to whom the Guru was all in all. But perhaps even the better for this simplicity, the divinity of the Master is made to stand out in all clarity.

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

HINDUISM IN THE SPACE AGE : By E. VEDAVYAS, I.A.S. Published by United Social Cultural and Educational Foundation of India, USCEFI), 3/57, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi 110060, pp. 652, Price Rs. 50/-.

Dr. Karan Singh, in his foreword to this book, remarks : 'The question is how far Hinduism will be able in the present age and amidst new forces to preserve its soul, maintain its individuality, conserve its strength and at the same time to satisfy the deepest aspirations of the modern spirit? The present work seems to be a highly laudable attempt to successfully answer that question in defense of Hinduism. The learned author has presented a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of Hinduism in the light of rational enquiry and scientific knowledge. His conclusions, in most cases, will be convincing to an unbiased reader.

The work has been divided into seven 'books', each book having several chapters. In the first chapter of book one, which is entitled '"New Age" Dawns', the author examines the scientific findings of several western savants (philosophers, scientists, para-psychologists) with regard to the supersensuous reality of man and his universe. These findings substantiate some of the basic tenets of Hindu mysticism, and may help to correct the sceptical attitude of many of our countrymen towards their religion. The author's note of warning to modern para-psychologists and the scientific investigators of the occult is very appropriate. If the study of the subtle powers of man (the *yoga-siddhis*), instead of being devoted to spiritual development, is used for man's material aggrandizement, it is bound to bring his destruction. The author mentions many examples from the Puranas to illustrate this point.

The other chapters of book one deal with the origin and basic foundation of Hinduism as, also, its influence on the religious cultures of several countries outside of India. The author has strongly put forward the case that Hinduism did not come to India from outside—that the so-called Aryan invasion, which is generally accepted without question, is a myth.

Book two is entitled, 'The Creation of Time, Space, And Evolution Of The Universe'. The author's rational justification and clarification of many concepts of the Puranas in this direction is edifying. In book three the author takes up the subject of the 'Gods And Goddesses Of

Hinduism', and very aptly clarifies certain wrong concepts about the Hindu deities. Book four has been named, 'The Book Of God'. The doctrine of Avatara and the descent of the Supreme Being into Avatara has been treated in a masterly way, understandable to the modern rationalistic mind. The subject matters of the last three books, entitled respectively, 'Book Of Fate' (dealing with the law of Karma), 'Lokas And Higher Worlds', and 'The Cyclic Law—Functioning Of The Universe' as also, the scientific basis of Ayurveda and Hindu Astrology, have also been explained clearly.

The writer deserves our compliments for the great pains he has taken to present and elucidate, in one single volume, a rich variety of topics about the religion, philosophy and culture of the Hindus. His approach is thought-provoking; in some cases his ideas are quite original and bold, to the degree that he may even be criticized as being fanatical, but the honest patriotic motive behind his writing can never be misunderstood. The author's deep understanding of both *para vidya* (transcendental knowledge) and *apara vidya* (secular knowledge) as classified in the Upanishads has given his work a special dignity.

The book contains forty illustrations and thirteen plates related to the subjects discussed. In the concluding chapter, 'The Message of Hinduism' the author's diagnosis of the crisis of modern man and his pointers to the resolution of this crisis are very impressive and justify the title of the book.

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA,
Vedanta Society of Sacramento,
Carmichael, California, U.S.A.

SANSKRIT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA-PARAMAHAMSA-DEVASYA CHARITAM : BY SWAMI HARSHANANDAPURI, *Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, 570002, 1975, pp. 32, Price Re. 1/-.*

It goes without saying that all our attempts at national integration in this country should be centred round the study and propagation of Sanskrit language and literature. For, our national culture, inherited from the great Rishis, is stored up in this ancient lore, and the national integration aimed at, is possible only through the revival of this cultural language. Original works pregnant with modern thought-currents should come to light so as to give an intellectual basis for national solidarity. The present book by Swami Harshanandapuri is one such current work deserving the appreciation of Sanskrit-loving people.

An original Sanskrit prose-work entitled *Vedamurti-Sri-Ramakrishna,* by Swami Apurvananda has already been published some years back, depicting the life of the great Master in detail. But the present work is different from this, both in style and diction : it is brief and simple, enabling beginners to imbibe the contents easily. All the main incidents in the life of Sri Ramakrishna have been touched upon in this brochure, without elaboration, facilitating easy assimilation of the Master's ideals, as well as developing of a taste for this language.

However, some grammatical mistakes have crept in, perhaps through oversight—*e.g.,* on pages 4, 8, 11, 16. Spelling mistakes in the printing are negligible. We hope necessary corrections will be made in the next edition, and thus make the book even more attractive.

SWAMI MRIDANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, BARANAGORE

REPORT FOR 1974

(With some later information)

Founded in 1912 as 'Baranagore Home of Service' in a small rented house, this Ashrama has held to the high ideal of Swamiji's 'man-making education'—to develop strength of character, power of concentration, breadth of outlook, and balance between modern scientific trends and time-honoured Vedantic principles. The Ashrama was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission in 1924, under its present name, and moved to its permanent site in 1928, though subsequently adjacent pieces of land have been added. Major extensions of buildings were made from 1951-54, and the present shrine and prayer-hall completed. Present activities are as follows :

SCHOOLS : Having started with Primary School, the Ashrama gradually added Junior High School, and finally in 1958, Higher Secondary Multipurpose School. Again in recent years, while keeping the Primary School (currently 296 students), the next level has become 'Junior Basic' (with two units, totalling 478 students) while the pre-

sent Junior High includes former 'High School' plus 'Senior Basic', with 233 students in all. The present Higher Secondary school has 866 students. In 1974, of 100 who appeared for the Higher Secondary final examinations, 98 passed; similarly in 1973, 101 out of 103 passed.

PHYSICAL TRAINING: Drills and parades in military style, and regular periods for other forms of exercise, were held under competent teachers. Football, cricket, and other sports were also well supervised, and two inter-class football leagues were conducted, with active interest and help from teachers of the schools. This year the Sports Minister for West Bengal made a grant of Rs. 80,754/- for walling and development of a newly-purchased playground near the Ashrama, for use not only by students of Ashrama schools, but also local clubs and schools. The annual Sports Competition, including all sections of the Ashrama's schools, was held before a large gathering, amidst much enthusiasm. Prizes and certificates were given to the successful competitors.

EXCURSIONS: During the year under review, fifty of the High School students were taken to the seashore at Digha, under care of five teachers. During the two-day stay they, among other things, collected specimens of fish from the beaches; on the return trip they visited Janpat fisheries. From the Junior Schools, 277 students with 26 staff-members made an excursion to the holy villages Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. With special guidance from the head of the Kamarpukur Math, the children had an educative as well as enjoyable experience.

RELIGIOUS CLASSES: Regular weekly classes were held each Saturday by the monks of the Order. Each Ekadashi day, Ramnam *kirtan* and *bhajan* were sung in the evening.

AUDIO-VISUAL UNIT: With quite an extensive array of equipment, much of it purchased through grants from the government of West Bengal, this Unit in the year 1974-75 gave 94 film showings in neighbouring areas, with average audiences of about 500. Some of these were in remote villages, where the opportunity is especially welcomed by the people. The Unit currently owns four films, purchased with Government grants, *viz. Trailangya Swami, Sri Ramakrishna, Rani Rasmani, Sadhak Ramprasad.*

LIBRARY: This Area-Library, with spacious well-ventilated Reading-room, contains over 10,000 books, and makes book-loans through local 'feeder-libraries' as well as this Reading-room. In the current year the State Government made a grant of Rs. 24,618.25 for Library maintenance and purchase of books.

CHARITABLE DISPENSARY: Continuing the work of many years past, this Homoeopathic outdor dispensary, under an efficient H.M.B. doctor, gave service to 3,539 patients with 21,942 re-visits, during the year 1974-75. Many of these patients came from distant places. The State Government's Health Department has been giving a Grant of Rs. 2,000/- annually for some years now.

VIVEKANANDA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS: These were held on 8th to 10th April, 1974, with the usual grandeur, on the Ashrama grounds, and included a group of lectures by distinguished citizens and monks of the Order before a gathering of nearly three thousands of people. Then the audience was entertained with *bhajan, kirtan,* devotional songs, and Rabindra Sangeet. Special mention should be made of the dramatic performances by the School boys, both of which attracted crowds nearly filling the stretch of the school's open field, —over 5,000 persons each. On the first day, boys from the Junior Schools enacted a drama on Sri Ramakrishna; and the last (third) day, boys of the High School presented 'Buri Balamer Teere'. Such was the appreciation by the audience that the performances were heard in almost complete silence— and the second one lasted three and a half hours!

Donations to the work of the Ashrama should go to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Baranagore, 37, Gopal Lal Tagore Road, Calcutta 700036. All donations are exempted from Income Tax.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY

The 115th Birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda falls on Wednesday, 12 January, 1977.

MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

REPORT AND APPEAL



We have pleasure in presenting to the generous public our Annual Report of the working of the MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL for the year April 1975—March 1976.

This Hospital came into being in 1903, as an integral part of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in the Himalayas, started in 1899, under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda. It provides prompt medical care, including treatment and medicines—completely free of charge—for the poor and helpless inhabitants of nearly 1,400 villages in the surrounding hills and forests. At present, the Hospital has 23 beds in its Indoor department, with an Operation Theatre and Laboratory.

During the year under review, the total number of patients treated in the Indoor department was 394 of which 313 were cured and discharged, 57 relieved, 10 discharged otherwise or left, and 14 died. In the Outdoor department the total number of patients treated was 18,381 of which 7,131 were new and 11,250 repeat cases.

We shall thankfully receive and acknowledge all contributions, endowments, free gifts of medicines and medical equipments to meet the growing needs of the Hospital. Crossed cheques and drafts may kindly be issued in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital* and sent to : The President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P.O. Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., India, 262524. Donors are exempt from Income-tax, under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 vide I.T. Case No. TC/PAN/1101-RQ-2125
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